

Crown Prince returns from Britain

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hamzah returned home Wednesday from the U.K., where he is pursuing his studies at Sandhurst College, to take part in the late King Hussein's eulogy. His Majesty King Abdullah and HRH Princess Rania Al Abdullah received the Crown Prince at the airport. Also receiving him were Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf Rawabdeh, Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti, Their Royal Highnesses Prince Hashem and Prince Rashed, and the chief of staff of the Royal airforce.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Cooperation جورдан تايمز نشرت يومية سياسية تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية الرأي

Volume 24 Number 7098

AMMAN THURSDAY-FRIDAY MARCH 18-19, 1999, DHUL HIJJA 1, 1419

Price: Jordan 200 Fils



JORDAN TODAY marks the 40th day since the passing of King Hussein with prayers, tributes and charitable activities around the Kingdom

King designates Queen Noor to head King Hussein Foundation

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Wednesday designated Her Majesty Queen Noor to establish and head the King Hussein Foundation as the "embodiment of Al Hussein's vision, his religious, moral and social values."

In a letter addressed to Queen Noor, King Abdullah paid tribute to his late father's life and work and highlighted the goals of the planned foundation.

Following is the text of King Abdullah's letter to Queen Noor:

I extend to Your Majesty my best wishes, respect and appreciation.

His late Majesty King Hussein, God bless his soul, derived his strength from his deep faith, his great heart, his true humanity and noble character. He was most mindful to instill the noble religious, moral and social values in the souls and minds of our dear Jordanian youth. He knew that these values were pivotal in the formation of the character of our society, and its cultural, psychological and social identities.

These values are the ultimate assurance for releasing and channelling creative energy toward the common good that contribute to social

progress and to augmenting cooperation and tolerance within our society. This consequently leads to greater bonds among our citizens, thereby enhancing national unity by concentrating on objective thinking, beneficial civilised dialogue and unanimity on common denominators in regard of all our national causes.

During all this, you were, Your Majesty, the companion of Al Hussein's way, sharing his thoughts, his faith and his constant work for the good of Jordan and Jordanians. He entrusted you to head the NHF, where your outstanding efforts in building the foundation, and your dedication to its work, are always cherished and respected by our one Jordanian family, whatever their roots and origins.

Therefore, to fulfill the legacy/message of the late King, and to continue his legacy in continuous giving, we saw that a foundation should be established in the Kingdom bearing his name: "The Foundation of King Hussein/The King Hussein Foundation" and would designate it to Your Majesty to establish it and head it.

This foundation, Enshallah, will be, with your patronage, the embodiment of Al Hussein's vision, his religious, moral and social values.

Al Salam Aleikum
Wa Rahmatullah

which be represented. It will support and promote sustainable human development and peaceful relations among people, the protection of the natural environment and will ensure security and social stability. In the fields of activity of the foundation, it will perhaps help, in cooperation with other establishment institutions, to deepen the values that the late King represented and to develop education to provide incentives for excellence, and to help in providing health care services and environmental protection as well as social justice, and raise standards of living for Jordanians for social stability and national security.

On the international level, I would like the foundation to participate with Jordanians and its officials to complete Al Hussein's legacy by building bridges with the world and lifting Jordan in an international milieu on an official and civil level.

I designate to Your Majesty this task, which we all hold dear to our hearts, and express my absolute trust in that you are the best person for this task and affirm my complete support to you and to those who will work with you in these important fields. I pray that God will keep you safe.

Al Salam Aleikum
Wa Rahmatullah

Opinion leaders — defined as senior statesmen, political analysts, party leaders, union and professional association activists and writers, including journalists and editors — showed slightly less confidence in the government's ability, but still gave it a 38.8 per cent approval rating, the highest given by opinion leaders to any government since the CSS began opinion polling in 1996 with the premiership of Abdul Karim Kabariti, who is now Royal Court chief.

Nearly 48 per cent of the general public believe that Rawabdeh himself will be very successful in his mission, and among his opinion leader

colleagues almost 50 per cent responded that he will master his mandate.

Just over 31.5 per cent and 36.5 per cent of the general public and opinion leaders, respectively, believe that Rawabdeh will be moderately successful, while 2.9 and 4.2 per cent, respectively, said the premier will not be successful at all.

Results of the survey, the fourth of its kind carried out by the CSS, have found for the third time a public that holds the prime minister in higher esteem than the Cabinet as a whole.

But, respondents have again defied expectations with such high approval

ratings.

Last August, when the former government of Abdul Salam Majali was dismissed to make way for that of Fayez Tarawneh, pundits expected that political and popular tension, created by the enactment of the Press and Publications Law, charges of nepotism and corruption and a water pollution crisis, would be relieved; a sentiment that was expected to be reflected in favourable public opinion ratings of the Tarawneh government. Instead, the survey showed that confidence in government had been severely battered and meted out a harsh judgement on the new execu-

utive.

Only 33.8 per cent of the general public believed then that Tarawneh and team would be very successful.

"I think the ratings can be attributed to the new era," said CSS Director Mustafa Hammami, in analysing the survey results. "There are so many changes. We have a new King, and we have seen so much international support," he said, referring to pledges of financial and military aid promised by Jordan's regional and international allies last month. "It's a sign that people expect more. And it's an indication of Rawabdeh's tough-guy image."

The new premier is a career politician who has served as a minister in five previous governments and is a three-time Lower House deputy, representing Irbid. He led the centrist Reawakening Party until it merged with eight other groups in the National Constitutional Party from which Rawabdeh has resigned. He is respected for broad knowledge and a caustic tongue. Officials who have worked with him have described him as a tough nut, even confrontational, but generally undaunted by harsh criticism.

(Continued on page 7)

Opinion poll finds high public confidence in Rawabdeh government

By Amy Henderson

AMMAN — A public opinion poll has shown that the new government, appointed two weeks ago, has captured public confidence after several months of waning faith in the previous government.

A survey conducted by the Centre for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan showed that 43.6 per cent of the general public believe that the recently appointed government of Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh will very successfully shoulder its responsibilities to meet its stated mandate.

World Bank to loan Jordan \$55 million for water projects

AMMAN (Petra) — The World Bank will extend a \$55 million loan to Jordan to help improve water resources and launch sewage system projects in Greater Amman Municipality, a World Bank statement said Wednesday. The projects are expected to cost a total of \$136 million.

King meets with press association council

Press has role in helping Jordan face challenges and hardships — King

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Abdullah yesterday told journalists that the sky is the limit for press freedoms in the Kingdom.

"The press has a role in mobilising the nation to face challenges and hardships," King Abdullah said yesterday during a meeting with the council of the Jordan Press Association (JPA). "The press and media are effective tools in charting the course of national action and in focusing on development issues."

The meeting with the King was the last in a series of meetings between the JPA and high-ranking officials since the appointment of the

new government just over two weeks ago.

King Abdullah also appealed to the press body to abide by a code of ethics and to place the national interest above all other considerations.

Officials have often suggested that the JPA's failure to enforce a code of ethics, embedded in the JPA law, on its members resulted in earlier governments' harsh attitude towards the press and in the controversial Press and Publications Law enacted last summer.

The JPA earlier this week met with Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti and last week with Prime Minis-

ter Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh. Journalists and media observers have interpreted the immediate attention granted to the press body as a signal that the Press and Publications Law file has been reopened in earnest.

JPA President Seif Sherif told the Jordan Times that King Abdullah said he had instructed the Rawabdeh government to study the law and return their comments to it to him, and that there would be other meetings to discuss the issue.

In an earlier interview, Sherif said that although the press law and other media issues ranked low on the government's list of priori-

ties, the JPA felt that the Royal Court and government were giving the law, the introduction of which has been a cause of national friction since mid-1997, high priority.

There have been no promises from anyone, but King Abdullah has asked the government for their comments, and [the JPA] has been asked to voice its concerns to the Information Ministry, which we have done," he said. "We are encouraged by the fact that we are the first [of 13] professional associations to meet with officials, and by the fact that the Parliament also has shown a willing-

Lower House denounces Israeli plan to reduce water supplies

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Legislators Wednesday denounced Israel's decision to reduce water supplies to Jordan under the 1994 peace treaty with the government, reflecting anger and frustration with Tel Aviv's recent announcement.

Israel informed Jordan on Sunday that it will cut by 40 per cent Jordan's share of water from the Lake Tiberias as stipulated in the Jordan-Israel peace treaty.

Others went even further. Earlier, 17 deputies in the 80-member chamber submitted a petition to House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali urging the government to revoke the peace treaty to protest Israel's decision to cut water supplies.

The motion was thrown out by Parliament after failing to win a simple majority of 41 votes.

Deputies, including pro-government tribal leaders and politicians, said the planned water cut "violated a fundamental element of the treaty" and was "tantamount to evading its provisions."

"The Israeli move casts suspicion on the Middle East peace process as a whole," said a House statement, reflecting anger and frustration with Tel Aviv's recent announcement.

Israel informed Jordan on Sunday that it will cut by 40 per cent Jordan's share of water from the Lake Tiberias as stipulated in the Jordan-Israel peace treaty.

Under the peace treaty, Israel extracts 12 million cubic metres (mcm) of water from the Yarmouk River in summer and Jordan uses the rest. In winter, Israel takes 33 mcm from the river of which 20 mcm are stored for Jordan in Lake Tiberias for the Kingdom's use in summer.

Israel said that it was not able to collect the 20 mcm from the Yarmouk this winter because of the regional drought.

"It is a violation of the fundamentals of peace treaty and it is an evasion of its provisions, and sheds doubts on Israeli commitments on the treaty," the statement said.

During the session, some legislators went as far as demanding that the government nullify the treaty, which ended a 47-year state of war with Israel. Others asked for an immediate halt to normalization.

Palestinians, Syria and Lebanon.

"[Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu's tour of the Jordan Valley, his promises to build large settlements there and to stop providing Jordan with water are flagrant provocations to Jordan," Tishrin said.

"The Netanyahu government is a real threat to the region's security and stability. It wants both the land and the water to go ahead with its settlement policy even if it deprives the Arabs of their rights," the paper said.

Speaking during a meeting at the Royal Court with ISESCO Director General Abdul Aziz Tweijri, King Abdullah also paid tribute to the director's own contribution to promoting ISESCO's educational and cultural activities in the Islamic World.

Tweijri, who offered his condolences on the passing of King Hussein, spoke about the organisation's programmes and plans, commending Jordan's cooperation with ISESCO and assistance in providing services to the Arab and Islamic worlds.

The meeting was attended by Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti and Education Minister Izzat Jaradar.

Earlier, Tweijri held a meeting with Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, who said Jordan will support ISESCO and continue activities which aim at bolstering and promoting scientific research programmes.

The prime minister said the organisation plays a significant role in developing cultural and educational programmes and also backs overall development projects in Islamic countries.

Tweijri noted that the organisation and the Education Ministry have in the past few years carried out joint programmes to train teachers and develop educational curricula.

Tweijri held a meeting earlier with the education minister and discussed continued coordination between the organisation and Jordan in educational fields.

They discussed the organisation's plan for developing school curricula in Arab and Islamic countries.

Tweijri said ISESCO is currently preparing for two major technology conferences in conjunction with UNESCO which will be held in Budapest in June and Seoul in April.

King expresses Jordan's interest in supporting ISESCO

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Wednesday expressed Jordan's interest in supporting the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO), which he said is playing a major role in serving Arab culture and education.

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Palestinians condemn, Israelis hail Congress vote on statehood

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The Palestinians reacted angrily Wednesday to a vote by U.S. lawmakers opposing a declaration of an independent Palestinian state, while Israel hailed the decision.

The U.S. Congress has no right to deny unilaterally the just and lawful right of a people to rid itself of occupation and to decide its own future in common with all the other peoples of the world," Palestinian Presidential Secretary Tayeb Abdul Rahim told AFP.

The legislature of the United States cannot tell others what they may and what they may not do," he said angrily.

The House of Representatives passed a resolution on Tuesday opposing the unilateral

declaration of a Palestinian state and warning Palestinian President Yasser Arafat that it would cut off all financial aid to the Palestinian National Authority if such an announcement is made.

The Senate adopted a similar bill last week.

Arafat himself, when asked about the vote, confined himself to reminding the United States of its obligations under the 1993 Oslo accords while leaving open the option of postponing the announcement of a state.

"There are agreements which have been approved. I hope that they will be respected," Arafat told journalists as he returned to Gaza after visiting Spain, Finland and Nor-

way.

But the Palestinian leader pointedly did not recommit himself to May 4 as the date for the announcement of a state, saying only that he would call a meeting of the Palestinian leadership before then to decide on a course of action.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, embroiled in a general election campaign, hailed the congressional vote as "a responsible decision which will strengthen peace and security."

"This was a responsible decision which will strengthen peace and security while lessening the threat of a Palestinian state being created with

Jerusalem as its capital," Netanyahu said in a statement after the vote was announced.

Abdul Rahim fired back that the resolution was designed to boost Netanyahu's Likud Party and other right-wing groups in the Israeli elections due on May 17.

"It is an expression of support for the extreme right in Israel so that it can continue occupying Palestinian land and intensify its campaign of settlement and it will lead to the blowing up of the peace process," he said.

"The vote by Congress at this time represents a clear intervention against the powers of peace in Israel during an election campaign," he said.

Tweijri noted that the organisation and the Education Ministry have in the past few years carried out joint programmes to train teachers and develop educational curricula.

Tweijri held a meeting earlier with the education minister and discussed continued coordination between the organisation and Jordan in educational fields.

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Al Jazirah resumes work after 4 months of closure

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh

AMMAN — The Doha-based Al Jazirah satellite TV station office in Amman said on Wednesday it resumed operations last Monday after receiving the go ahead from Minister of Information Nasser Lawzi.

Mohammad Ajlouni, the director of Al Jazirah office in Amman, told the Jordan Times he received a telephone call from the minister allowing the station to reopen after four months of closure.

In an unprecedented move against any foreign media office, former Prime Minister Fayed Tarawneh's government had ordered the closure of Al Jazirah on Nov. 4 in protest of a talk-show programme that attacked the Kingdom and its leadership.

The fiery weekly programme "Al Ittihad Al

Muakess" (the opposite direction) had dedicated one broadcast to discussing the fourth anniversary of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty. The show turned into what Jordanian viewers considered as "Jordan bashing," by anchorman Faisal Qassem, and one of his two guest speakers, Mohammad Khalifah. Khalifah had accused Jordan of conspiring with Israel since its foundation in 1948, saying the Jordanian army had surrendered Palestinian land to the Israelis "without any resistance," and describing Jordan as an artificial entity.

The government responded by accusing the station of slander, cancelling the accreditation of Al Jazirah's six employees, protesting to the Embassy of Qatar demanding concrete changes against what it

described as its "pattern of targeting Jordan," and demanding an official and public apology by those responsible.

No apologies were delivered.

"Despite the closure, the Tarawneh government was not aggressive but rather cordial," said the Al Jazirah producer in Amman, Tareq Ayyoub.

During its four-month closure the station was not allowed story coverage except those regarding late King Hussein's return home from the Mayo Clinic in January, his funeral and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Amman earlier this month.

"We were invited by the Press and Publications Department to cover King Hussein's funeral, however we were not allowed to transmit our material through JTV like the rest of the satellite stations, therefore we fed it through the AP satellite," Ayyoub said.

He told the Jordan Times that Prime Minister Abdur-Rauf S. Rawabdeh's government showed more leniency with the station adding that it and the JTV received memos last week from the Ministry of Information allowing the station to resume feeding its material through JTV.

Lawzi confirmed Al Jazirah's return to work saying an official letter of accreditation was not yet sent to the office but that "in principle" Al Jazirah was told to go ahead with its work.

"On Thursday we will meet with Al Jazirah to finalise procedures related to administrative and legal issues," he added.



Three children from the International Community School in Amman on Tuesday present a cheque for JD100 to Chris Larer of The Jordanian Society for the Protection of Animals. The money, to be used to support the work of the JSWA, was raised by parents and friends of the school at an end of term performance attended by HRH Princess Rahma Bint Hassan

Pharmacy student commits suicide

AMMAN (J.T.) — A second-year student committed suicide Wednesday by jumping from a three-storey building at Al Israa Private University after learning of his dismissal, according to official sources.

The student, Hussam Suleiman, a sophomore at the Faculty of Pharmacy, reportedly killed himself after the university administration discovered that he submitted forged transcripts when he

applied as a transfer student to the university, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

"When university officials confronted him, the student admitted in writing to forging the documents," Petra said.

A specialised committee that examined his case recommended dismissing him on Wednesday morning, and said that the decision could have been appealed to the university council within 15 days.

the report said. The student locked himself in a laboratory of the pharmacy faculty and started throwing chemical bottles while wielding a knife.

Interior Minister Nayef Qadi, the university administrators and other officials tried to calm the student for nearly two hours, but he threw himself from the lab room window, the report said.

Officials told the Jordan Times Wednesday

evening that the student drank a chemical liquid then went to the third floor lab of the faculty and jumped from the window.

The student was rushed to a nearby hospital where he was declared dead one hour after his arrival.

A medical team, led by Mo'men Hadidi, head of the National Institute of Forensic Medicine, will perform an autopsy on Thursday.

Prime minister submits petition for public clemency of prisoners

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdur-Rauf S. Rawabdeh on Wednesday said he submitted a petition to His Majesty King Abdullah urging him to declare a public clemency for all prisoners, including convicted criminals.

Rawabdeh, who was speaking to Lower House members during its ordinary session, said the government was waiting the response of King Abdullah.

The premier noted that clemency can only be

granted when a clemency law is issued from the Parliament, following a Royal Decree.

Government officials told the Jordan Times that the King is considering the petition to declare "either a special or public clemency."

During the Lower House session, Deputy Abdullah Jazi urged King Abdullah to issue a public clemency to ensure the prisoners' release.

Head of the Public Freedoms Committee, Deputy Mohammad Azaydeh, told the Jordan

Times that almost 10,000 criminals are believed to be jailed in the Kingdom's prisons.

Azaydeh said clemency might be sought for one-third of them, especially women who served half of their jail terms. He said there are between 600 and 700 women prisoners.

"If His Majesty issues a public clemency, it will be up to the Parliament to fix the conditions for the prisoners' release."

Head of the Public Freedoms Committee, Deputy Mohammad Azaydeh, told the Jordan

"crimes of honour" could be eligible for clemency if their cases were settled through tribal law.

Azaydeh noted that among the crimes that could be included in the clemency law are those who were jailed for issuing bounced cheques or those sent for jail for traffic violations.

The Parliament will put the outlines for the those who are eligible for the clemency. We do not know when it might happen. We are waiting the King's answer to our request," he added.

He indicted that those convicted of murder and

By Amy Henderson

AMMAN — An international press freedom group has resumed lobbying the government to safeguard free expression and adopt an approach towards the press that is "fully consistent with Jordan's obligations under international law."

In a letter addressed to Minister of Information Nasser Lawzi, congratulating him on his appointment as minister two weeks ago, the U.S.-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) said it was writing also to convey the organisation's "concern with respect to various provisions of Jordan's 1998 Press and Publications Law," particularly its use to bring charges against Al Majd Editor-in-Chief Fahed Rimawi, who last month was detained for material published in the weekly newspaper that was considered offensive to the Royal family and security forces.

Rimawi was released

after two days of detention but subsequently charged with violating Article 37 of the law.

The article dictates a sweeping list of topics prohibited from publication in newspapers or any other medium in the country. Among the restrictions

are information or material that disparages the King and the Royal family, harms the military or security forces, contains personal insults to the heads of Arab, Islamic or friendly states, harms national unity or incites strikes, sit-ins or public gatherings in violation of the law."

Rimawi wrote in articles appearing in late January and early February that His Royal Highness Prince Hassan, who was replaced as heir to the Throne by His Majesty the late King Hussein in January, laid his revolver down in front of the King and asked to be shot if King Hussein thought he was a traitor. In previous issues, Rimawi called for the resignation of then-Prime Minister Fayed Tarawneh and his Cabinet.

The paper was ordered

suspended by the Court of First Instance — a prerogative granted the court under Article 50 — on Feb. 13. The decision that was overturned by the Court of Appeals five days later.

Human Rights Watch Executive Director Hany Megally wrote in the letter to Lawzi that "the broadly formulated language of these and other prohibited topics invites arbitrary interpretation by authorities and wrongly places

the burden on writers, editors and publishers to guess what is meant by these ambiguous terms."

Human Rights Watch said that Articles 37 and 50, along with Article 39 are inconsistent with international standards of free expression. (Article 39 bans the publication of information on any stage of an ongoing investigation into any case or crime or the deliberations of the court in a case under consideration before the final sentence is announced unless the publication of such information has been authorised by the public prosecutor or the court.)

"These articles deprive journalists and editors of the liberty to publish a diversity of news... and deprive the public of free access to information... from a diversity of sources."

Megally wrote, "In cases of alleged violations of censorship rules, the imposition of news blackouts at the discretion of the authorities allows journalists to be investigated and prosecuted outside the view of the general public."

HRW said the law violates Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which the Kingdom is a state party.

The former government

of Tarawneh, which initiated the proceedings against Rimawi, promised a "soft implementation" of the press law, which went into effect on Sept. 1, 1998. The case against Rimawi is the first and only legal case moved against a journalist since the enactment of the law.

HRW said that in its view, "the actions taken against Al Majd did not represent a lenient approach."

"These harsh measures violated the right to free expression granted in the ICCPR and which Jordan is obligated to uphold."

The organisation appealed to the government to safeguard free expression... and adopt an approach "fully consistent with Jordan's obligations under international law."

"Until such time as the controversial provisions of the press law are amended or repealed, we appeal to [Nasser Lawzi] to refrain from the use of Article 37 to prosecute journalists for exercising the right to free expression and Article 50 to suspend the publication of newspapers and periodicals."

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel. 4773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO

19:10 News headlines
19:35 Doc. — Perspective
20:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)
20:30 Programme on the late His Majesty King Hussein
21:00 Islamic History in Jordan
21:30 ...On the Banks of Jordan
22:00 ...News in English
22:10 Doc. — National Geographic
23:00 ...News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)

PRAYER TIMES

04:22 Fajr
05:39 (Sunrise) Duhr
11:44 Dhuhr
15:09 'Asr
17:49 Maghreb
19:06 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swieifieh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Aten Syriac Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Lat-

ter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De La Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifieh Tel. 5920146
The Unite Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

AMMAN:

Firas Pharmacy 5661912

Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730

Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004

Rukn Al-Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:

Dr. Mahmud Abi Halja (02) 245209

Fouad Pharmacy (02) 275360

ZARQA:

Dr. Mazin Saffarini (05) 985832

Palestine Pharmacy (05) 98562

Deserts 05/24

Amman 08/22

Agaba 12/28

Jordan Valley 12/27

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111

Shmeisani 5607071

Shmeisani Hospital 5607431

Jordan Hospital 5607550

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777

Fire Brigade 4671101

Blood Bank 4775121

Highway Police 5343202

Traffic office 4896390

Public Security Dept. 4630321

Hotel Complaints 5605800

Price Complaints 5661176

Water & Sewage Complaints 4897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 4877111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 0132

Central Amman Telephone 4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101

Jordan Television 4773111

Radio Jordan 4774111

Water Authority 5680100

Electricity Authority 5815615

Electric Power Co. 4636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53200

Queen Alia Int'l. Airport 44-53200

Mafraq, J. Amman 4636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071

Shmeisani Hospital 5607431

Jordan Hospital 5607550

University Hospital 5



Home News

Interview with Her Majesty Queen Noor

'He felt joy, pride and confidence in his Jordanian family'



By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — Her Majesty Queen Noor sees the establishment of the King Hussein Foundation as an opportunity to work towards a better future and thus fulfil the dream of the late King Hussein for a peaceful and prosperous Jordan.

Queen Noor said that she looked forward to working closely with His Majesty King Abdullah, the Royal family and the larger Jordanian family in fulfilling the late King's legacy through the King Hussein Foundation, which King Abdullah yesterday entrusted her with establishing and heading.

"This will be a national and international institution dedicated to sustaining and giving a dynamic life to His Majesty's [the late King Hussein's] vision and his message of humanity, compassion, humility, peace, and progress in areas that were of particular

importance to him," Queen Noor told the Jordan Times Wednesday.

The institution will provide an open forum for Jordanians and the international community to support and participate in political, economic and social efforts "carried out by the late King," the Queen said.

"There should be an institution where Jordanians and the international community could give an enduring life to his [King Hussein's] dreams, his vision and most important his humanitarian spirit."

Among the foundation's aims is the hope for the development of education, providing incentives, in addition to offering health care services.

King Hussein's battle with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma had intensified the interest of both Their Majesties in helping to find a cure for cancer.

"Just as this foundation will support education and opportunities for students to develop

their abilities to serve the country, I'm sure there will be an aspect to support efforts to improve and make available to

'Remember him with a smile and a determination to contribute...to the welfare of our entire family before our own self interests'

those in need of medical services not only for cancer, but medicine in general," Queen Noor stressed.

One of King Hussein's main goals was to develop Jordan's health care sector into a leading medical hub in the Middle East.

The King Hussein Foundation, said the Queen, will cooperate with other established institutions in the coun-

try hoping that through the suffering we might be contributing to more scientific knowledge for others fighting the disease. There was useful information that came out of this process as some of it was experimental."

She pointed out that "the efforts of this foundation should complement and support the efforts of the government and other institutions in the country to carry on the work that His Majesty King Hussein began and gave so much of his heart and soul and body to."

The late King has been described as a statesman of vision and courage. His courage and faith were Queen Noor's source of inspiration in her perseverance and steadfastness at the onset and throughout the most daunting challenge of their 20-year marriage.

"Our life (has always) been

very much a roller-coaster of

great expectations and dashed hopes and it taught us the importance of patience and faith...the last challenge we faced was unique for us encompassing different aspects of our life together," the Queen recalled.

She explained that not only were the very personal, political and spiritual facets of their lives intensified at the time of the King's seven-month fight against cancer, but also "his work for peace and his constant unending commitment to serve Jordan for the present and the future were part of every moment of that time we were struggling."

The daughter of an Arab-American family, Queen Noor, 47, obtained a degree in architecture and urban planning from Princeton University. She met the late King when she began working in the region in the field of research and planning.

Of the time at Mayo Clinic, Queen Noor said, "We always concentrated on the future, devoted all our energies to the

future hoping that through the suffering we might be contributing to more scientific knowledge for others fighting the disease. There was useful information that came out of this process as some of it was experimental."

The Queen recalled the late King's complete commitment to the welfare and service of others which overrode his own interests.

"He was always willing to take risks and make sacrifices for the love of his people. All this love was felt, shared and given back to him by our Jordanian family, which was a particular joy for him when we returned on Jan. 19," she said. "All throughout the King had felt such joy and pride and confidence in the future of his Jordanian family which was a source of peace and hope for him until the very end."

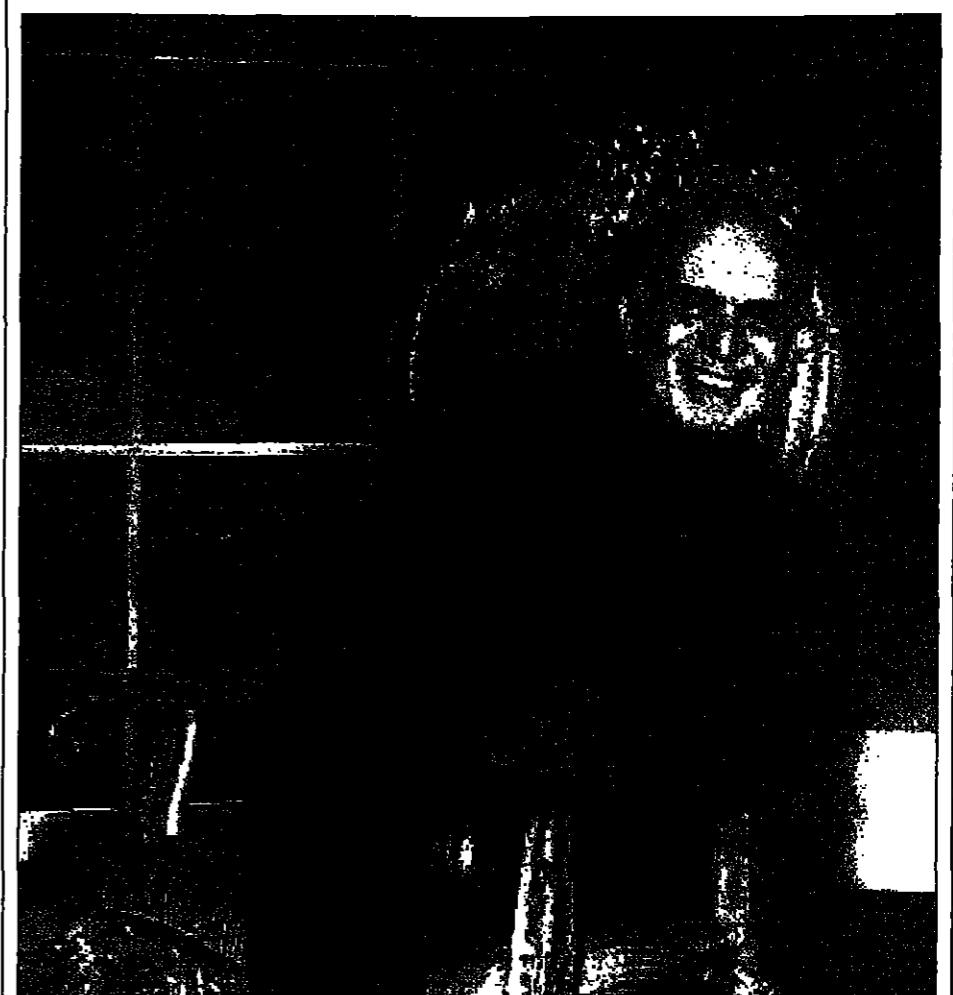
Queen Noor emphasised that the best tribute to the late King for each of us would be to remember him "with a smile and a determination to contribute from our hearts to the welfare of our entire family before our own self interests."

The Queen said that she had been deeply moved by the wide range of Jordanians who have been such a source of comfort and who have urged her to continue the work she has done with and for the King. The rest of her life will be dedicated to this, she said.

"We should see ourselves, the Queen said, as members of a family that "has a great deal to offer and the potential to make humanitarian and other contributions within the region and the world."

King Hussein died on February 7, 1999 at the age of 63. Jordan will mark the end of the 40-day national mourning period with prayers in the Kingdom's mosques and churches.

Jordan remembers King Hussein at end of 40-day mourning



By Caroline Faraj

Thousands of wreaths still lie at the King's grave, which has been visited by over 250,000 people — from foreign officials who visited Jordan to condole the Royal family to Jordanians from all walks of life.

Officials said Royal family members will visit the King's grave on Thursday before dispersing to the country's 12 governorates to attend special Muslim prayers that will begin at 3:00 p.m. and end at 7:00 p.m.

King Abdullah, who ascended the Throne after his father died, will attend the main prayer at Amman's King Abdullah Ben Al Hussein Mosque.

Christians will also hold prayers for King Hussein in many churches across the Kingdom.

The National Aid Fund announced it will distribute JD100,000 to poor families.

"Helping the poor has been always one of the main deeds that King Hussein urged us to do," one official told the Jordan Times. "And we know this will make him happy."

The NAF plans to dis-

tribute food sachets and other donations as part of the nationwide campaign.

Scores of sheep will be slaughtered in a traditional sign of sacrifice, and the meat will be given to the needy.

Other Jordanians are marking the end of the official mourning period by holding gatherings to express their love and to pay tribute to the late King Hussein.

Circassians, Palestinian refugees, children and university students have held eulogies around Jordan.

Jordanian expatriates and foreigners across the globe are also sharing the sorrow of Jordanians.

Royal Court officials said the court has received millions of letters, cables and e-mails of condolence.

"You cannot imagine the number of letters and e-mails that we have received from everybody," one official said.

A documentary film about the life of King Hussein will be aired on Jordan Television late on Thursday.



Municipal elections to proceed under 1955 law, municipal merger before parliamentary committee

By Francesca Ciriaci

servation in the city councils.

"We hope to hear from the government soon that [municipal] elections will be held on time and under the current law, although we have great reservations on it," said an IAF statement on Feb. 27.

The IAF, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, has long criticised the current legislation, especially the 1995 amendments under which the mayor and half of the Amman Municipality Council's 40 members are appointed by the Council of Ministers.

"The current law does reflect neither the level of democracy Jordanians aspire to nor their political maturity, because it deprives Amman citizens of the right to elect their mayor and half their municipal council's members," the statement said.

The IAF followed its mother organisation in the historic boycott of the November 1997 general elections — a move that many inside and outside the party came to regret — after a feud with the government over the current general elections law.

Party sources have admitted that the decision to participate in the

upcoming local elections stemmed from the party's need to strengthen its grassroots and test a following that official IAF reports say has decreased in the past months.

Though it remains Jordan's biggest party, the IAF has been said to have lost some of its once iron grip on its traditional strongholds, namely Palestinian refugee camps, densely-populated urban suburbs, and other underprivileged areas.

Analysts have said a decrease in membership may be a result of both general apathy and disenchantment towards political parties and a more specific loss of exposure and influence in many public institutions due to the elections boycott.

One official at the municipal and rural affairs ministry told the Jordan Times on Wednesday that elections campaigning in the municipalities will start one week before the elections and will last for five days, according to the law.

Voting should take place in one day, but some polling stations may stay open for an additional day if the quorum of 51 per cent of registered voters has not been achieved by the end of the first voting

day.

In the last 1995 elections, which witnessed a national turn-out of 72 per cent and the election of one woman as mayor, polling stations in the populous Ruseifa municipality, northeast of Amman, stayed opened an additional day.

Voting age in municipal elections is 19, one year more than in parliamentary elections, and the family book is used as identification at polling stations.

Contrary to controversial stipulations in the general elections law, according to which voters can register in any district they please, citizens must elect in the municipality of their residence, according to the municipalities election law.

The number of seats in each municipal council ranges from six to 12, according to the size of the population. Municipal councils have jurisdiction over infrastructure projects within their boundaries, and administer yearly budgets fixed by the government. The biggest budget for this year, JD10 million, was allocated to the municipality of Zarqa, one of the most populous areas in the Kingdom.

By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — Some 20,000 employees of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency are threatening to launch a series of strikes soon if UNRWA does not heed long-time demands for wage increases and better working conditions.

"If we do not receive a positive response within two weeks, we will start with strikes, first at the level of the three committees (representing staff) and then all the staff members," UNRWA staff representatives said in a letter sent to the agency's Director General Peter Hansen.

The letter was sent on Tuesday to the debt-ridden agency that offers education, health and relief services to nearly 3.5 million Palestinians, made refugees during the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars. A copy of the letter was made available to the Jordan Times on Wednesday.

Representatives of the agency's 20,000 employees in Jordan said they had to consider stepped-up measures of protests after waiting for years to see some tangible improvements, not just promises.

"Lack of a health insurance scheme, end-of-service compensation, early retirement, and university scholarships for children of staff, have made our working con-

ditions intolerable," they said.

Representatives of the UNRWA's teacher, service, and labour committees accused Hansen of making "false and empty promises as we have not seen a minimum of our (past) demands resolved, thus continuing an endless battle which has been going on for the past five years," they added.

UNRWA officials in Amman were not immediately available for comment.

Hansen intervened personally six months ago to avert a decision by UNRWA staff to stage an open-ended strike across UNRWA's area of operations — in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip — to push for better working conditions and clearer remuneration.

"He (Hansen) then met with the executive staff committee and promised to resolve all pending issues...but nothing, not even the minimum of what was promised, has been realised," one staff representative told the Jordan Times.

UNRWA staff have been demanding an adjustment to their salaries on grounds they "are not enough to see us through the month."

UNRWA suffers from a deficit of around \$60 million in this year's \$350 million budget forcing it to make cuts in its services. In existence since after the 1948

Arab-Israeli war which led to the creation of Israel on parts of British-mandated Palestine.

Jordan, host to 40 per cent of the overall refugee population, spends \$380 million a year on infrastructure and other services in 13 refugee camps across Jordan.

"During the past three years, we have seen nothing save for cuts," they said in their letter. "While (salary) increments reached 60 per cent for senior managers, the pay of the majority of the agency's workers has remained unchanged for the past five years."

Staff have always perceived regulations governing their work as ambiguous, as they are not considered United Nations employees and cannot receive the relatively lucrative packages offered to employees of other U.N. agencies.

They also do not receive the same benefits as government employees.

"If we are not considered U.N. staff, then under which category do we fall? Which organisation are we to follow and which laws are we to apply?" asked one staff representative.

Gunnar Lofberg, director of UNRWA operations in Jordan, said area staff are paid according to government salaries.

UNRWA was forced to adopt a series of austerity measures over the past five

years, including a three-year employment policy which terminates the employees term at the end of the contract.

More and more employees are now being hired on a daily basis, staff say.

"This policy only serves to destroy the agency's infrastructure and create instability for staff reflecting negatively on the quality of services given to refugees."

Cost-slashing measures have included a 20 per cent cut on international staff and cuts in hospitalisation subsidies — now refugees are only subsidised at government hospitals.

The refugee population growing at 3.5 per cent annually is placing massive strains on the agency's services resulting in understaffed schools and overworked doctors.

The U.N. General Assembly voted four months ago to extend the agency's mandate for another three years.

Staff demands concluded their letter with a call for the centralisation of decision-making in the agency and expanding the authorities of the director of operations.

"Waiting for a decision on a simple matter to be taken from Gaza (UNRWA headquarters) only serves to make the decision-making process unsatisfactory, uncomfortable and monotonous," they said.

Disgraced EU Commission wants quick exit

BRUSSELS (R) — The European Union's scandal-tarred executive urged member states Wednesday to move swiftly to name a new team, a day after it resigned amid allegations of corruption and mismanagement.

The 20-strong European commission said in a brief statement it would continue in a caretaker capacity, managing day-to-day affairs but not putting forward any new policy initiatives.

The EU's 15 member states scrambled to find consensus on a solution to the crisis.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, whose country holds the rotating EU presidency, continued a whirlwind tour of capitals, sounding out fellow leaders in Vienna, Athens, Rome and Lisbon.

While some want the disgraced commission replaced at once, French European Affairs Minister Pierre Moscovici said the appointment of a new executive should wait until after European parliament elections in June.

There are concerns that EU leaders may get bogged down in trying to solve the commission crisis at a summit in Berlin next week

where they should be busy resolving a row over EU funding.

Clearly finding its position untenable, however, the outgoing commission wants to leave as soon as possible.

"We have resigned and we have neither the desire nor intention to stay in office longer than necessary," it said in a statement read to reporters by a spokeswoman.

The lame duck commission took just one action at its weekly meeting Wednesday, approving a proposal to create a new fraud office to clean up the EU civil service.

The executive quit Tuesday after a group of independent experts accused it of turning a blind eye to fraud and cronyism and of losing control of the Brussels administration.

Since then, the commission, particularly its president, Jacques Santer, has come under intense pressure to leave.

Misjudging the mood Tuesday, Santer insisted he personally was "whiter than white" and had no reason to go.

Schroeder was quick to make clear there could be no renewal of Santer's mandate. "One can rule that



European Research Commissioner Edith Cresson (left) chats with European Development Commissioner Joao de Deus Pinheiro prior to the weekly commission meeting in Brussels Wednesday. Demands for the instant departure of the disgraced European Commission mounted Wednesday as Brussels attempted to carry on business as usual

out," he told reporters in Vienna where he met his Austrian counterpart, Viktor Klima.

Europe's media have already begun speculating on who may succeed the hapless Santer, with NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana and former Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi heading an unofficial shortlist.

A NATO official said, however, that Solana, a former Spanish foreign minister, was too busy to be thinking about a new job. "The secretary-general at

the moment has a full-time job at NATO ... with the Kosovo crisis now reaching the critical stage.

He really, really, really doesn't have time to think about other things," the official told reporters.

EU leaders may opt instead to appoint a caretaker leader — possibly commission Vice President Sir Leon Brittan — to steer an interim commission, a mix of new faces and current members, through until the end of the year while they prepare a new team.

In December, the European Parliament, newly empowered by the Amsterdam treaty due to come into force in the summer, would vote on a new commission based largely on the caretaker team.

The problem remains of what to do with former French Prime Minister Edith Cresson, regarded by many as the unrepentant villain of the piece.

France would be reluctant to renominate her even in a caretaker role, yet would not want to publicly shame her and make her a scape-

goat for the commission's demise.

Fanning the flames of media outrage, the former education commissioner alleged that the expert report which slammed her for cronyism had been "tampered with" to make her look bad.

The independent inquiry, conducted by a panel of five legal and auditing experts, singled out Cresson in a 144-page report accusing the executive of losing control of its 19,000 staff and turning a blind eye to irregularities.

'Serbs won't budge on Kosovo talks'

PARIS (AFP) — Serb negotiators Wednesday stubbornly refused to budge on a peace plan for Kosovo, as a village massacre that was a trigger for the peace process was deemed "a crime against humanity."

"There is no movement whatsoever," a European diplomat told AFP as day three of renewed peace talks unfolded in the French capital. "We're just going around in circles."

In Kosovo's capital Pristina, a team of Finnish forensic experts declared that the mass killing of 45 ethnic Albanians in January in the Kosovo village of Racak was indeed "a crime against humanity."

But the Finns, who carried out post-mortems on 40 of the dead, were unable to reach an opinion on how exactly they were slain, said Helena Ranta, head of the forensic team.

Many of the victims had been found with bullet wounds in the back of the head — leading the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) chief of mission in Kosovo, William Walker, to point an accusing finger at Serb security forces.

Racak was one of the worst atrocities of the year-long fight by Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority for self-rule from Belgrade, and led directly to 17 days of peace talks at Rambouillet chateau near Paris last

month.

Those negotiations produced an 82-page draft accord that the ethnic Albanians formally agreed to Monday when round two of talks opened, but which diplomats say the Serb side now is trying to rewrite.

In Kosovo itself, Serbian officials said the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) clashed Wednesday with Yugoslav border guards near the mountainous frontier with Albania.

"Terrorists" attacked the border guards at around 4:00 a.m. (0300 GMT) near Djakovica, a town 10 kilometres from the border, said the Serb-run media centre in Pristina.

Yugoslav troops repulsed the attack, it said, adding that there were no casualties among security forces.

Belgrade regularly refers to the KLA as "terrorists."

The guerrillas are known to smuggle weapons regularly into Kosovo via mountain trails from remote villages inside Albania.

As he arrived Wednesday at the talks' venue, Serb President Milan Milutinovic accused the international community of "fraud" by trying to get Belgrade to accept a deal it did not want.

Asked how long the talks could go on, he replied: "Who knows? I'm not the master of the game. The others are."

"The aircraft are there, the plans are ready, we know what we're doing, we are well trained," he said.

By "others" he meant the

United States and European Union (EU), who are threatening NATO air strikes if Belgrade refuses to sign the draft accord and if the conflict escalates.

"Nobody wants air strikes, but if this is the only way to get Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic (the Serbs' ultimate leader) to accept peace, then we would go for it," a diplomat said.

But there are disturbing signs that Milosevic was gearing for more war in the province.

U.S. Defence Department spokesman Kenneth Bacon said Belgrade was moving armour and troops to Kosovo's border with Macedonia, apparently to a buildup there of NATO forces that would be part of a Kosovo peacekeeping operation.

The Yugoslav army has also been moving surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft guns around Serbia, Bacon said.

"They certainly are bracing for war but they continue to participate in the talks," he said.

U.S. General Wesley Clark, supreme commander of NATO forces in Europe, told British radio that the "activation order" for NATO action against Serbia "remains in effect."

"The aircraft are there, the plans are ready, we know what we're doing, we are well trained," he said.

China releases dissidents ahead of U.N. human rights session

BEIJING (AFP) — China has released a handful of dissidents as it fights a new campaign to head off a hostile motion at the annual session of the U.N. Human Rights Commission.

The New York-based Human Rights in China (HRIC) Wednesday reported that Fang Jue, a former Communist Party official held by police since last July, is to be formally charged and tried.

Fang, 44, published works urging political reforms in early 1998. He was a close associate of Shi Binhai, a reformist Beijing-based journalist who has been detained without charge since last summer. The families of Fang, Shi and Huang were given no information about the whereabouts or condition of the detained men.

European Union foreign ministers will decide Monday, after getting a report from the delegation, whether to back a motion condemning human rights violations in China, the same day that the annual U.N. session is set to open in Geneva.

Huang was arrested on Nov. 2, at the same time as Wang Youcai, a founding member of the China Democracy Party (CDP), who was later sentenced to 11 years in prison on charges of subversion.

Wang Jinbo and Lai Jinbiao, two other dissidents detained in Hangzhou in past weeks, were also released Monday evening, the rights group reported in a statement.

But Frank Lu, spokesman for the Information Centre, called on Western countries "not to be fooled by ploys used by the Chinese

authorities in the lead up to the meeting of the U.N. Human Rights Commission."

The New York-based Human Rights in China (HRIC) Wednesday reported that Fang Jue, a former Communist Party official held by police since last July, is to be formally charged and tried.

The United States adopted a similar position, citing improvements in China's record, but has since criticised the renewed crackdown on political dissent.

The U.S. Congress last week unanimously passed a non-binding motion urging the Clinton administration to renew support for a censure motion against China.

A team of U.N. human rights commissioners was also received Wednesday in Beijing.

China's foreign ministry, when questioned by AFP, stressed that the U.N. mission, which will leave Beijing just before the opening of the Geneva session, was not connected with fears that a censure motion would be tabled against China.

The talks reportedly focused on the two international covenants signed by China in 1997 and 1998, both of which have yet to be ratified by parliament.

Beijing has argued that it needs more time to harmonise its existing laws and legislation with provisions in both the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

One ocean away from round-the-world first, balloonists head to Atlantic

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — Swiss balloonist Bertrand Piccard and his co-pilot Brian Jones soared Wednesday towards the last great feat of the Millennium — to be the first to circumnavigate the globe in a balloon.

With one more ocean to cross after finishing the hardest stretch, the record-setting team headed toward the Gulf of Mexico and should be near Jamaica around 0600 GMT Thursday, support staff said.

Meteorologists were still setting the final route, over the Atlantic.

By Saturday, the balloon should have officially accomplished its world tour at the Mauritian city

of Bir Boghran, if easterly winds permit.

The pair plan to touch down at the foot of the pyramids in Egypt after crossing North Africa.

"They have six days of fuel left, which is largely sufficient to reach Egypt," an expedition spokesman, Gerard Sermier, said in Geneva.

"All winds are favourable, regular communications with the team are still possible after the black hole over the Pacific," Sermier added.

In an interview carried out through control headquarters Tuesday, Piccard said only bad luck could scuttle the venture at this stage. "Now we tell ourselves: hopefully our

speed will be fast enough so as to reach Europe before we run out of propane."

Having clocked more than 31,000 kilometres since leaving the Swiss Alps on March 1, organisers said, the two balloonists have set a world distance record, though it has yet to be officially recognised.

The current official distance record is of 22,910 kilometres — a stretch the U.S. balloonist Steve Fossett beat with his 24,466-kilometre journey.

When they reached the Mexican coast Tuesday night, the Anglo-Swiss duo also became the first balloonists to cross the Pacific during a non-stop,

round-the-world attempt. Other balloons have conquered the Pacific, but only those that left directly from South Korea or Japan and timed departures to benefit from optimal weather.

Piccard and Jones took six days and 16 hours to cross the Pacific, considered the most perilous stretch of the journey.

"So that little puddle was what they call the Pacific," Jones joked in a conversation with the Geneva control centre.

"It's really nice to see so many folks following our little jaunt," he added.

Piccard, a Swiss psychiatrist, should be in familiar territory for the final stretch, as he has already

piloted a balloon over the Atlantic in 1992.

Early Wednesday, the Breitling was soaring at an altitude of 10,000-11,000 metres and at a speed of about 100 kilometres per hour. It slowed down significantly after it abandoned the jet stream winds that propelled it across the Pacific.

Piccard and Jones took turns piloting the craft and sleeping, and were in regular contact with their headquarters in Geneva.

Spokeswoman Patricia Fournier said the two were in top form. "They've got into a good rhythm, their morale is high, and they get along extremely well," she said in a phone call from Geneva.

In case things go awry, the Breitling pair are equipped with a kit containing parachutes, inflatable dinghies, life jackets, survival wet suit and food for several days.

There is also an emergency dropping system to separate the gondola from the helium envelope.

Britons Andy Elson and Colin Prescott were plucked from the Pacific Ocean near Japan a week ago after poor weather and heavy snow forced them to ditch their round-the-world balloon attempt.

British tycoon Richard Branson's attempt to be the first to circle the world in a balloon ended in the Pacific off Hawaii on Dec. 25.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Latvians turn increasingly sceptical of European Union

RIGA (AFP) — Support for joining the European Union has dropped sharply in Latvia, with only about one-third of Latvians ready to vote for membership if a referendum were held now, according to a new poll. Although joining the EU is the Baltic country's top foreign policy goal, only 36.6 per cent of respondents would have voted in favour of EU membership the February poll showed — a drop of 10 per cent from a November poll. A total of 30.4 per cent were ready to vote against joining the EU. One-third of Latvians remain undecided. "Many Latvians feel that we are still not ready to join the EU yet," said a spokeswoman for Latvia's European Integration Bureau. Latvia had hoped to get promoted out of the second group of EU candidate countries at the EU summit in Vienna last December and receive an invitation to begin membership talks. But the debate on restructuring EU finances led the European Commission to recommend putting off a decision regarding Latvia for one year. The strongest EU supporters are young people under 25, urban residents, people with higher education and higher income levels.

Africa forest conservation summit opens in Cameroon

YAOUNDE (AFP) — African leaders Wednesday began a summit here on saving vast tropical forests across the centre of the continent, still largely unscathed by loggers and on viable management methods. The day-long summit has been jointly organised by host country Cameroon and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) and is due to lead to a Yaounde declaration aimed at protecting Africa's forests before it is too late. A WWF statement said participants were to "commit themselves to protecting the great wood stretches of the Congo basin that are the world's largest forest ecosystem after Amazonia". Present at the summit are presidents Paul Biya of Cameroon, Felix-Ange Patisse of the Central African Republic and Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea, while the WWF said that Gabon was represented by its vice-president. Congo's leader was still to turn up. Experts from the WWF, whose honorary president is Prince Philip of the United Kingdom, have stressed that the forests of the four Congo basins — Dja in Cameroon, Mambili in Congo, Ivindo-Djoua in Gabon and Sangha in the Central African Republic — are "the lungs of the planet". These areas now constitute the main relatively unscathed dense and humid forest land on earth after massive logging in the Amazon. "hence the need to safeguard them," the fund stated. Prince Philip gave a speech to open the Yaounde summit, which was also being attended by numerous experts from the United Nations, the World Bank, the European Union and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

FBI to join Sarajevo car bombing investigation

SARAJEVO (AFP) — United States FBI experts arrived in Sarajevo Tuesday and more were expected later Wednesday to assist local police investigating the car bomb explosion that left a top Bosnian Croat politician gravely wounded, the American embassy said here. "The Bosnian government asked for help, so we have brought in the FBI. They are here to assist local police," embassy spokesman Dale Backer said. "The United States regards such terrorism as an assault on democracy," an embassy statement said here Tuesday. Jozo Leutar, 45, interior deputy minister of the Muslim-Croat Federation, suffered severe head injuries when his car blew up Tuesday as he was being driven down one of the capital's main streets. Leutar's condition was "stable, slightly better." Wednesday morning, after he had undergone four operations Tuesday, to remove a piece of shrapnel which penetrated his skull and lodged in his brain, the doctors said. According to U.N. police, the other two people in the car were slightly injured. Stjepan Pocnjak, a local interior ministry official, said a bomb had been placed underneath Leutar's official car and was probably detonated by remote control. Leutar, a former police employee, has been deputy interior minister since 1996.

9-year-old beaten to death by friends

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Eight boys aged between six and 13 years were arrested in South Africa's Mpumalanga province after allegedly beating their nine-year-old friend to death, police said Wednesday. Police spokesman Captain Izak van Zyl said the boys from Ekuhuleni township allegedly killed Thamsanqa Nkambule Tuesday afternoon after accusing him of stealing an identity document and other items. "The boys took him to one of their houses at about 5:00 p.m. and then hit him with sticks until he passed out," Van Zyl said. The eight boys then went to the police station to report a case of theft against their victim. When police went to investigate, they found Nkambule's swollen, bloodied body on a bed with an identity document belonging to a parent of one of the suspects in his pocket, Van Zyl told AFP. All eight boys were arrested after they confessed to the police that they beat Nkambule. A murder docket has been opened against the boys, who are expected to appear in court later this week.



Former anti-apartheid cleric Allan Boesak, accompanied by his wife Elma, is surrounded by supporters as he leaves court after being found guilty of charges of misappropriation of donor funds (Reuters photo)

Boesak, from anti-apartheid icon to common criminal

CAPE TOWN (AFP) — From an icon of the anti-apartheid struggle to common criminal found guilty of stealing money from victims of apartheid. Allan Boesak's fall from grace has been swift and painful.

Boesak, 53, was convicted in the High Court here Wednesday on three counts of theft and one of fraud involving money donated by Scandinavian donor agencies and by U.S. singer Paul Simon to his Foundation for Peace and Justice (FPJ) charity between 1988 and 1994.

After being pronounced guilty, Boesak said he had no comment. For once the shrill voice which in the mid-1980s inspired thousands, if not millions, to resist the apartheid government remained silent.

Boesak shot to prominence in the early 1980s, when he headed the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in Bellville, near Cape Town, using the

pulpit to denounce the injustices of apartheid.

In 1982, the fiery orator gained international recognition when he was appointed president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, comprising non-traditional, mainly black, churches around the world.

Travelling widely, he preached the anti-apartheid message in churches wherever he went, gaining favour in the process with Nelson Mandela's then-banned African National Congress (ANC), and with Mandela himself, who at the time was still in prison.

When the United Democratic Front (UDF) — an umbrella body of anti-apartheid movements — was formed in Cape Town 1983, Boesak was elected one of the many leaders, often crossing swords with the apartheid authorities. In the same year he per-

suaded his Bellville church to form the FPJ, with the aim of aiding victims of apartheid.

Backed by his anti-apartheid credentials, Boesak persuaded foreign donor agencies to pour millions of rand (dollars) into the FPJ for use to develop housing schemes and educational programmes and to care for children left orphans through the actions of the apartheid authorities.

After South Africa's historic first all-race elections in 1994, Boesak was appointed finance minister in the Western Cape provincial government and, in 1995, as South Africa's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva.

By then, however, Scandinavian churches were questioning how their donations were being used by Boesak and demanded an inquiry. Mandela was forced to cancel Boesak's U.N. appointment.

The South African police inquiry culminated in Wednesday's conviction in the Cape High Court.

Judge John Foxcroft said in his judgement that 1990 appeared to have been a "watershed year" for Boesak in that he divorced his first wife and married his current wife Elma, a former television presenter; he resigned as president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches; and his lifestyle changed to one of expensive cars and luxury homes.

Boesak, the judge said, also found he was forced to pay the huge debts Elma brought into the marriage. He began dipping into donor money.

The judge's words will find resonance with many of Boesak's supporters who blame Elma for changing their hero from a humble churchman to a man with a high-flying, fast-spending lifestyle.

Music academy in Berlin to carry Menuhin's name

BERLIN (AFP) — The international academy for gifted young musicians in Germany, which is being set up here, will carry the name of Yehudi Menuhin, the world famous conductor and violinist. Menuhin, who had himself been a child prodigy, was co-initiator, patron and supporter of the project.

He died of heart failure in Berlin last Friday, the association setting up the project said Wednesday. Two prestigious Berlin orchestras — the Berlin Philharmonic and the Staatskapelle Berlin — were dedicating concerts this week to Menuhin.

The Berlin Philharmonic gave a concert on Tuesday performing works by Schumann and Shostakovich under the baton of Kurt Sanderling. And German President Roman Herzog will attend a concert Sunday by the Staatskapelle under Daniel Barenboim in a performance of a Beethoven violin concerto, with soloist Maxim Vengerov, and Beethoven's fifth symphony.

The performers have agreed to forego their fees and ticket revenue will be handed over to Menuhin's Live Music Now Foundation, which allows young musicians to perform in old people's homes and prisons to people who are unable to attend concerts.

U.S., North Korea defuse nuclear standoff, problems remain

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A new U.S.-North Korea accord allowing U.S. inspections of a suspected North Korean nuclear weapons site leaves major problems unresolved and has already drawn fire from Congress.

Most immediately, U.S. officials worry about Pyongyang's ballistic missile programme and suspect the tightly closed country may be concealing other aspects of a nuclear arms programme at other installations, experts say.

Pyongyang stunned Washington and its allies last August 31 by testing a three-stage missile far more advanced than anything U.S. intelligence had believed it was capable of producing.

And while the deal announced Tuesday envisages further bilateral talks on North Korea's missile programme, in Pyongyang beginning March 29, it does not address missile testing — which clearly worries U.S. legislators.

At worst, some analysts and officials believe, North Korea could use the time it bought with Tuesday's agreement to continue developing various weapons of mass destruction.

tion and then use them to bargain for more aid.

Under the terms announced Tuesday in New York, North Korea will permit multiple U.S. inspections of the suspect site at Kumchangri, near its declared nuclear weapons facility at Yongbyon.

The United States will, for its part, provide additional food aid to North Korea through the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP). Washington is already Pyongyang's single largest food donor through the WFP.

It should also now be able to keep legislators from cutting off U.S. heavy fuel oil shipments promised under a 1994 deal that froze Pyongyang's declared nuclear programme and sidestepped a military confrontation.

But Republican legislators and some analysts fear the pattern of U.S. aid in response to North Korean threats has established a dangerous precedent and set the stage for further brinkmanship in the not-so-distant future.

In a statement, Representative Benjamin Gilman, a Republican from New York and chairman of

the House International Relations Committee, warned late Tuesday of possible show-downs to come.

"It looks like we are pouring good U.S. food aid down a North Korean hole. I am also worried about all of the other North Korean underground facilities we know are dug throughout the country," Gilman said.

"This agreement smacks of a "food for access" deal which could lead to further provocative actions on the part of the North Koreans to extort future concessions from the United States," he added.

"I worry that the North Koreans and other rogue nations will begin charging the United States for ensuring their compliance with their international agreements," Gilman said.

The Washington Post quoted Senator John McCain, Republican from Arizona and likely presidential candidate, as saying he feared a pattern of (U.S.) material concessions ... in exchange for vaguely worded commitments that the North Koreans have no intention of keeping."

The Republican-run Congress months ago

declared open season on President Bill Clinton's North Korea policy, and supporters inside and outside the government have given them plenty of ammunition.

Just last week the U.S. special coordinator for North Korea, former defence secretary William Perry, warned that Pyongyang "is moving toward nuclear weapons as well as the ballistic missiles that can carry these weapons."

"That is putting it into a position of confrontation with the United States," said Perry, who is expected to make broad policy recommendations to Clinton within weeks.

CIA Director George Tenet also recently told Congress that Pyongyang may soon develop a ballistic missile able to reach the United States and suggested that widespread hunger and instability make the government uniquely unpredictable.

Administration officials counter that engaging Pyongyang — keeping its officials talking and giving them something to lose if they behave aggressively — remains preferable to the alternative.

Apple computer makes blueprints to software publicly available

CUPERTINO, California (AP) — Apple Computer Inc. will become the first major computer company to release its operating system's programming secrets to software developers around the world.

Apple's move to make its source code available is limited to its software that runs central computers. At least for now, it will continue to keep secret its operating system for the Macintosh personal computer.

Nevertheless, the announcement gives a big push to a movement to use the Internet for enlisting volunteer programmers and speeding software development. The so-called "open

source" method also is used for Netscape's browser software and the Linux operating system for business computers.

In contrast, companies such as Microsoft Corp. and Sun Microsystems Inc. jealously guard blueprints to their software to surprise rivals with improved features.

At Tuesday's press conference announcing the source code availability, Apple Internet CEO Steve Jobs also unveiled a \$499 operating system, called the Mac OS X Server, for use by schools, small and medium businesses and departments within larger companies.

The source code package

to these source codes and Apple really gets it," he said. "Now we'd like to see more of their codes."

Jobs said that Apple will watch how the server source codes are used, but that he would like to open codes from more systems in the future.

Technology experts at universities said that the open source code will allow them to customize their networks to Apple's operating system.

"This new accessibility will allow sites such as MIT the ability to bring new technologies to the Macintosh platform sooner," said Marshall Vale at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"We in the Internet hacker culture want to have access

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E-mail: jotimes@go.com.jo

Web Site: <http://www.access2arabia.com/jordantimes/>

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times Advertising Department

Serious blueprint

THE GOVERNMENTAL blueprint for coping with water shortage, this year reflects the seriousness with which Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh is dealing with the crisis. The first feature of the programme of action is the insistence that Israel live up to its treaty obligation and supply the Kingdom with all its share of water agreed upon with no conditions attached. Although the prime minister has not disclosed how he is going about attaining this objective, one can count on his manner of talking to the Israelis to be effective. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has already ruled out full implementation of the treaty with Jordan on the water issue and called instead for an "amicable solution."

The second aspect of the emergency plan is to take full control of some 1,654 privately-owned wells, 528 of them unlicensed. Many governments in the past flirted with this measure but no government was able to see it through. The current government, however, says it is determined to go ahead and seize control of water resources under private hands and end their current exploitation. It is pertinent to recall in this context that the very important Disi water is heavily used by five major farms in the south at nearly no cost to their owners, and this misuse of scarce water resources must end forthwith.

Former Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti was in the process of cancelling past state agreements with these five farms under which the private farms used the Disi water resources for free. The Kabariti government was changed, though, before it was able to conclude its measures to stop the free water exploitation in the south.

The other complementary steps the government envisages are no less critical and important. Domestic water rationing is clearly in the pipeline and no one may complain about this remedy. People who have swimming pools and heavily use water for this purely recreational purpose may have to rely on their own system of water purification instead of municipal water to fill their pools. Limitations on water-intensive agricultural production also stands to reason under current water conditions. While the government takes the bull by the horns, we all should contribute in our homes, offices and elsewhere to water conservation.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek commented on the Israeli decision to cut water supplies to Jordan this year for reasons of a regional drought, calling it a "bizarre" decision that contradicts the 1994 peace treaty. Jordan rejected the decision, because that water share rightfully belongs to the Kingdom, and because the serious drought also affects Jordan, added Fanek. Israel wants to cut 50mcm, which makes up 5 per cent of Jordan's total consumption of water and at the same time amounts to less than 1 per cent of the Israel's consumption, said the writer. Israel is being "moody" in dealing with the treaty, said Fanek; it implements what it likes and suspends what it does not. Fanek hoped that Israel will back down on its "stupid" decision and meet its commitments under the peace treaty.

Al Dustour's Mazen Saker said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent statements do not only concern water issues and Jordan's share, but also underlined that Israel will remain for good in the Aghwar area, and that Jerusalem is not negotiable as it is the Jewish state's "eternal and unified capital." Jordan Valley Netanyahu's statements are not unusual. It is "strange" to think that such a stand should only be adopted by the prime minister and his Likud Party, argued Saker. It seems that the Arab media want people to believe that the problem only concerns Netanyahu and his party, forgetting that the Israeli Labour Party is the one that was in charge of the 1967 war, constructed settlements and set up the Alon project, which relies on the following: Jerusalem as Israel's capital, settlements in the Jordan Valley area which remains under Israeli domination, expanding the Jewish state, and withdrawing only from areas with crowded Arab populations, said the writer. These are the basis for the Israeli vision of the current settlement, and they are strongly backed by Netanyahu, said Saker.

UNLESS GOD Almighty, or mother nature, interferes in the last minute and brings serious rain, in a year which has almost been without, the forthcoming summer will be a tough one to bear.

The scenario, as the Jordan Times editorial entitled "Watering Peace" (last Tuesday) effectively depicts it, is all too familiar: no water at homes for weeks, no bottled water in the market, kids sent to relatives in hometowns, the prices of water tanks rocketing.

Think of bathrooms without running water. While in the rural stage of our development (not long ago), this posed no problem whatsoever for us (we responded to the call of nature in nature itself), but in the blissful urbanised stage which we have recently entered, bathrooms without water amounts to a nightmare.

Not enough rain, not enough water. No peace of mind at this level.

Well, what do you do? Let's be hopeful. It is the second half of March still — it is not too late yet for the Almighty, or mother nature, to intervene. According to our grandparents (who are generally accurate, despite their tendency to dramatise), "March is the month of the big seven snow storms." Well, we will be grateful, now that we are approaching the end of this blissful month, with just one

big snow storm. And there is still April. Some good rain falls in April, usually.

Hopefully, this April will not be that of which T.S. Eliot speaks in his "Waste Land": "the cruelest month of the year." We hope it will be benign. But there is May also. Do not underestimate May. I remember many a May when people came to regret a change of clothes. "Change of clothes"? Well, on the first of May every year soldiers and policemen switch from winter to summer outfits. Many civilians follow suit. I distinctly remember many a May when, after a couple of sunny days, a week of cold and rain comes.

Civilians, less obliged to follow rules than people in the military, switch back to winter clothes. I hope that this May many among us switch back to winter clothes.

But you know what, you can't count on the weather very much. Mother nature is fickle. Eliot may be right: not only April but March and May may turn out to be not only cruel but stingy. No peace of mind at this level.

What can you count on? Well, maybe the peace treaty with Israel. Not long ago (it now sounds like ages ago, though) when many among us in this part of the world were debating the pros and cons of peace, many

emphasised the fact that peace will not only bring us an immediate restoration of land but also of water rights.

Water emerged as a real issue then (it is a real issue now): no peace, no water rights. Peace has come (at least in part), and our water rights should come. We will not get into statistics, figures, quotas, articles of agreements, and the logic of politicians or experts. The so-called man in the street in our part of the world, who is hard hit by water shortage, does not stomach figures, statistics and quotas. His logic is simple: if there is a peace agreement, there are water rights (or there should be). Otherwise, there is something seriously wrong with the agreements and with peace. No water, no peace.

We hope the Israeli government will take this into account and not disappoint or embarrass the Jordanian negotiators in the eyes of the man in the street. We hope the Israeli government will turn out to be reliable this dimension of the peace agreement at least, and not turn out to be as fickle as the weather. Such fickleness, unlike the fickleness of the weather, will not only harm people in the summer; it will also harm people's conception of peace. We hope there is no fickleness there.

But we also hope there is no fickleness on part of our government. Yes, tough measures need to be taken. We need to ration and economise, more seriously than ever last year. This is something we all can understand. The man in the street included. But as the Jordan Times editorial has also stressed, the government needs to be fully aware (and fair) as to where it should economise and where it should not, and as what it needs to do — and do well. Water pipe leakage, for example, cannot be tolerated.

I can make every drop of water count at my home, and I can wash myself in a glass, even. But when I see a government bulldozer break a

No water, no peace

View from Academia



Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

ness on part of our government. Yes, tough measures need to be taken. We need to ration and economise, more seriously than ever last year. This is something we all can understand. The man in the street included. But as the Jordan Times editorial has also stressed, the government needs to be fully aware (and fair) as to where it should economise and where it should not, and as what it needs to do — and do well. Water pipe leakage, for example, cannot be tolerated.

I can make every drop of water count at my home, and I can wash myself in a glass, even. But when I see a government bulldozer break a

water pipe "by mistake" and the water runs in alleys and streets for days, I cannot help but feel angry and sceptical of governmental advice and governmental policies. Also, when I see some neighbourhoods drink drops and bathe in drops and others wash their cars with hoses at full capacity, I cannot but feel the injustice of distribution.

There is, additionally, a problem of inconsistency. At the beginning of last summer, we used to get water once a week. Wednesday evening, drops of water started to fall in the water tank, and their momentum increased at night. By the morning of the second day, we had the water tank half or two-thirds full. Fine, we said.

A couple of weeks later, the picture changed dramatically. Two weeks passed, and no water came. Only the third week did drops begin to fall in the tank. Does anybody keep track of who gets what and when? I also hope the Water Authority will have mercy on people who live on hill tops or next to the "end" of the water lines.

We are willing to face the coming summer with an open mind, but we hope there is no fickleness this year on part of mother nature, partner-in-peace Israel and our new (promising) government. No water, no peace: peace of mind, and Mideast peace.



Coping with water shortage

By Munther J. Haddadin

SEVERAL BOOKLETS have been issued by the World Bank addressing the subject of water in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. Some articles have also been published on the same topic here in Jordan and in Arabic newspapers published in London. Other leading newspapers have published short articles about the subject as well (Los Angeles Times, New York Times and others.)

Speaking generally of water in the MENA region, or of Water and the Arabs, does not help diagnose the particular problems faced by particular countries. Actually, it masks the huge differences among many of its countries. One can not parallel the water stress in a country like Jordan (175 cubic metres per capita per year) with the water situation in Iraq (3200 cubic metres per capita per year) or Egypt (1100 cubic metres per capita per year). Moreover, within the territories of the same country, like Syria for example, the water stress varies from high in the Damascus region (Barada and Awaj basin) to comfortable in the Deir Zor region (Euphrates basin) and in the Orontes basin at large.

Likewise, one cannot speak in general terms of the water problems in a country like Lebanon with modest deficit in the foreign trade in food commodities and Jordan, for example, whose deficit in the same trade was about \$115 per capita. Although agriculture contributes some 8% to Jordan's GDP, it generates some 24% of the jobs in the market, and helps reduce the foreign exchange bill which would be high in comparison to Jordan's ability to earn foreign currency. Additionally, one cannot play down the importance of agriculture in the lives of rural people like Jordanians in the same way one ventures to play down the role of agriculture in a country like Israel. Whereas Jordanians have practised agriculture since the dawn of civilisation, Jews at large had practised different trades throughout their history and agriculture was introduced to their livelihoods by the Zionist movement and for reasons not from a need to survive but from the designs to establish a homeland in Palestine.

Finally, one cannot generalise, like the above cited articles and booklets do, and recommend desalination of sea water as the only way out of the existing or impending water stress. A sweeping statement like that ignores the disparities in national incomes between countries, the relative locations of water consumption from the sea cost, and the domestic availability of cheap ener-

gy. In a country like Israel, for example, where the GDP per capita approaches \$18,000 per year, and the urban areas are either on the seashore or close to it, desalination could be the logical answer; it can not be afforded by the Palestinians whose per capita income is hardly \$1,600, and the consumption centres are away from the sea coast and at higher elevations. And whereas agriculture can be played down in a country like Qatar or Kuwait, where the population is heavily urban and the ability to import food is high, the importance of agriculture is great in such countries as Yemen, Jordan and Tunisia among many others. Usually, demographic and security factors lean towards maintaining rural population in their areas, and the ability to service foreign trade with foreign currency determines the importance of domestic food production.

Thinking the answer to the water problems lies in basic, unsophisticated principles and their dualities, summarised as follows:

Water is needed for economic development, and, conversely, economic development is needed for water. The society has to attain a decent level of economic well-being to have it afford the cost of new, expensive water. The abilities of the country to accelerate its economic growth determines its capability in making more water available. As a yardstick, it should be noted that the consumer, in arid areas like ours, should not pay more than 2 to 3 per cent of his income for domestic water, i.e. his income should be between 30 to 50 times the cost of water.

Water is needed for human life, and, conversely, human efforts are needed to manage water. The development of human resources — through education and training, organisation and participation, and public awareness — is a primary factor in making more water available for beneficial use, and for the minimisation of waste. This is the most important factor in facing times of crisis. Human innovation is needed to improve water use efficiencies, and for the treatment and reuse of waste water.

Water is needed to preserve and clean the environment, and environmental protection is needed to preserve the water resources. The least costly water is the existing water if protected against pollution and against over-pumping and misuse.

Energy is needed for water, and, conversely, water is needed for energy. The two are twins: from water falls man generates energy, and with energy inputs man is able to generate sweet water from salty sea water, and to pump water to

higher elevations. Environmental concerns emerge when desalination of brackish water is done inland away from the seashore. Additionally, human innovation is needed for new and affordable ways of generating power to make water desalination affordable by the majority of societies. This displays the interdependence of water, energy, the environment and human resources, and the interdependence between advanced and developing societies.

The above basic principles provide our countries with the lead to face the existing and impending water problems in our water scarce countries. The water strategy of each country, in consideration of these principles and the disparities referred to in the above, should be tailored to its own conditions.

Other important factors to be taken into consideration pertain to the international characters of water. These can be summarised in the following two points:

Sharing of international watercourses and aquifers; and many a thesis has been forwarded about future wars in the Middle East because of water. Interestingly enough, those who advanced the war theory have never referred to its applicability to arid zones outside the Middle East.

In this respect it should be remembered that water, by its very nature, is used to extinguish fires and not to ignite them. Moreover, one fails to see how a war can make more water available for all. If war is waged to acquire the waters of neighbouring countries, the gain would be only temporary because the state of war can not last for ever. People have to live and let live. Cooperation, on the other hand, produces benefits for all.

Free trade in food commodities is a must to mitigate the impacts of water shortage. If the strategy of a particular country allows agricultural water to be diverted to municipal and industrial uses, then replacement of the agricultural production has to come from imports.

The policies of economic boycott and of containment as applied by some big powers will have to be weighed and factored in when the water strategy of a particular country is charted. The applicability of these factors to the charting of Jordan's Water Strategy (1997) is worth reviewing. Worth reviewing also are the options open to Jordan in meeting the challenge of water scarcity. This can be done through public fora of which the press is one.

The writer is a former minister of water

To declare or not to declare

FIVE YEARS ago Palestinian and Israeli negotiators held up in the Cairo were given a tough task: conclude negotiations for an interim agreement for the implementation of the Declaration of Principles between the PLO and Israel by May 4th, 1994.

This was the day U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher was due in Cairo and it was also Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's birthday. Under such Arab and American pressure the maps, details of border crossings, criteria for prisoner releases, safe passage ways and other details had to be agreed upon.

As soon as the agreement was signed the clock for the five-year interim period set forth in the agreement signed on the White House lawn in September 1993 began ticking. This Palestinian-Israeli agreement which is commonly referred to as the Oslo Agreement stipulates clearly and unambiguously that earnest talks for the permanent status of the Palestinian territories are to begin no later than the beginning of the third year of the agreement and are to be concluded "no later than the fifth year." This timeline more than all the details of the interim phase was the key to Palestinians accepting to begin an onerous and uneven peace process with their enemies who had illegally occupied their territories and dispersed their people to the four corners of the world. To his many Palestinian and Arab critics the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, repeatedly referred to the end of the interim period as the beginning of Palestinian statehood.

However, except for a short ceremonial opening of the permanent status talks in May 1996 by Shimon Peres, no movement has taken place on this front. Palestinians have carried out most of their obligations of that and the two subsequent agreements signed with the Netanyahu Administration (Hebron and Wye). The U.S. administration, which witnessed all the agreements, has publicly exonerated the Palestinians while chastising the Israelis for not carrying out their obligations vis-à-vis the peace process.

As we approach the end of the agreed upon deadline Palestinians were placed in a quandary. The Israeli elections expected in the summer of 2000 had been abruptly changed to May 17th 1999. Arab and Western leaders are pressuring the Palestinians to postpone the declaration of an independent state. The Palestinian public fear indefinite Israeli procrastination, and are pressuring that the goal of statehood which was the reason many reluctantly accepted the Oslo Agreement should not be put off any more.

The major argument of the opponents of a declaration of statehood argue that such an announcement two weeks before the Israeli elections will help the anti-peace camp. They also fear that such a unilateral Palestinian declaration could trigger further unilateral Israeli actions including more settlements and possibly the annexation of all the West Bank and Gaza areas still under direct Israeli military control.

Supporters of the declaration dismiss the above-mentioned arguments: there is no proof that

Jerusalem Life



such a declaration will help this or that party, they say. Some argue that a postponement of the declaration could be presented by the Netanyahu election campaign as further proof that Palestinians can be intimidated into required behaviour only by a "strong" Israeli leader. Annexation of further Palestinian territories doesn't scare Palestinians who have seen perpetual occupation and annexation. They say that the major parties in Israel are committed publicly to withdraw from parts or all of the Golan Heights. The Oslo Agreement signed by the state of Israel confirms that Jerusalem's future will be negotiated. Both Jerusalem and the Golan Heights were unilaterally annexed by Israel.

Palestinians, who are often chided by Israelis and warned not to interfere in the Israeli elections are puzzled by the position they find themselves in. They are being asked by the international community to make a decision that is connected to their future for the sake of influencing the Israeli public before elections.

Israeli elections, of course, should not be the only reason for what Palestinians decide. The nature of the Palestinian state and the state of preparedness for such a state should certainly take precedent in making such a decision.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat can't let this date set forth by the international community go by. The Oslo Agreement placed many restrictions on Palestinian political, legislative and economic life.

The interim agreement has not produced even minimum improvements in the daily lives of nearly three million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinians need to take real control over their affairs.

Movement of people and goods

Kicking up a sandstorm

Qatar television beams something new over Arab airwaves, but its opinions aren't always welcome

By Scott MacLeod

WHEN THE princes and prime ministers of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council gathered for an annual meeting recently, Arab television stations served up their usual coverage, which is invariably uncritical and mostly reverential.

All that is, except the Al Jazeera Satellite Channel broadcasting from the tiny oil sheikdom of Qatar. On its *Opposite Direction* talk show, Al Jazeera, which means the peninsula, gave Kuwaiti professor Abdullah Nefaisi a platform to question not only the usefulness of the regional economic body but the fitness of the Gulf monarchs to govern. He rebuked Saudi Arabia for locking up dissidents and attacked the Saudi clergy for ignoring issues like royal corruption. "Political freedom in the Gulf?" Nefaisi scoffed. "It doesn't exist."

But then there's Qatar, population 600,000, where Emir Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani, 47, is making good on a promise of greater democ-

racy made when he took over from his father in 1996. Since his government launched Al Jazeera later that year, the Doha-based channel has become the most freewheeling station in the Arab World, delighting millions of viewers across the Middle East — numbed by decades of censored news on state-controlled television — and Europe and North America. "Any one broadcasting the truth, whether it makes governments happy or not, is going to win audiences," says Cairo journalism professor Hussein Amin. Adds Jon Alterman, author of a study on satellite television's impact on the Middle East: "This is the beginning of a fundamental change."

Al Jazeera's talk shows are tackling crucial yet taboo subjects like human rights, women's freedom, banned political groups, polygamy, torture and rival interpretations of Islamic teachings. *Opposite Direction* has infuriated Arab rulers by bringing into the studio political dissidents from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Syria, Jordan, Morocco and

'This is the beginning of a fundamental change'

Iraq. Host Faisal Al Kasim encourages controversy: many of the two-hour, weekly call-in programmes have featured guests shouting to be heard, hurling insults, and even coming close to fistfights.

Not a few offended Arab regimes

would like to take a few swings of

their own. Kuwait's information minister flew to Doha to complain in person after a programme needled his government for its stand on Iraq. Algeria's regime reportedly shut off electricity in parts of the country rather than allow Algerian television sets to pick up a debate on the country's bloody civil war. The Jordanian government closed down Al Jazeera's news bureau in Amman after a talk show guest accused Jordan of collaborating with Israel.

In Saudi Arabia, Muslim preachers denounced Al Jazeera for corrupting Arab morals, and there is said to be a "political fatwa" forbidding Saudis from appearing on the station's shows. Nor has host country Qatar been spared: Al Jazeera has aired criticisms of the emir's activities, notably one of his pet projects, a Middle East economic summit to which Israel was invited.

News director Salah Nejm says no story is off limits and two recent scoops seem to prove the point: an exclusive broadcast of a speech by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and

an interview with Saudi renegade Osama Ben Laden. Al Jazeera's 90 broadcasters, editors and correspondents are determined to take advantage of the digital technology that helps make their broadcasting revolution possible. During the American and British bombing blitz on Iraq in December, Al Jazeera's live satellite coverage kept pace with CNN's.

That kind of professionalism explains why Al Jazeera is the No. 1 Arab satellite news channel. Can it last? One problem may be financing. The plan is to make it independent by 2001, but advertisers may prefer to put their dinars into fluffier channels like Lebanon's LBC, whose women's exercise programme, *Hayfa Is the Only One* for You is a huge hit with both sexes. Al Jazeera's staffers are keenly aware that in 1996 Saudi partners abruptly pulled the plug on an earlier Arab news channel broadcasting from London after it aired a documentary about Saudi executions.

Despite the diplomatic heat on

Qatar, however, there is no sign that the emir will blink. Last month, Al Jazeera added Washington and Tehran to its network of eight foreign news bureaus and began broadcasting 24 hours a day. "Free expression is a human right," says Al Jazeera chairman Hamad Bin Thamer Al Thani. "It is difficult to control information when the world has become a small village."

Qatari officials insist that Al Jazeera is part of a plan to expand political participation inside the country. That will not only head off future discontent, they say, but will cushion Qatar against regional rivalries and falling oil prices.

Towards that end, curbs have been lifted on Qatar's local television and newspapers as well. Last week, the country held its first democratic elections — for 29 municipal districts — in which women will stand as candidates and have the vote. The important question may be whether Qatari-style glasnost will catch on.

—Time

Opinion poll finds high public confidence in Rawabdeh government

(Continued from page 1)

Another analyst attributed the favourable ratings to the warm reception accorded Rawabdeh and certain members of his team by the press.

Although Tarawneh's was a lame duck government for reasons beyond its control, the Rawabdeh government inherits problems common to all previous cabinets — a deepening economic crisis, escalating poverty, a faltering peace process and, now, another looming water crisis.

Rawabdeh's mandate is stacked with seemingly insurmountable tasks. His Majesty King Abdullah told Rawabdeh that his task first and foremost is to rejuvenate the national economy, whose growth hovers at near zero per cent, and second, putting unemployed Jordanians to work. The King also entrusted Rawabdeh with waging war against nepotism, corruption, negligence and incompetence in the public sector and purging down the lumbering bureaucracy.

The public and opinion leaders, however, are less impressed with the combination of Cabinet personalities: only 33.3 per cent of the general public and 23 per cent of opinion leaders

think the new combination is suitable. More than 32 and 46 per cent, respectively, think the new alliance is only moderately adequate.

"It shows that, although people approve of Rawabdeh, his Cabinet is not up to the calibre people expect," said Hamarneh.

The new government has 11 first-time ministers, including several technocrats and two former professional association heads.

Still, the public regards the executive as quite capable in dealing with each assignment.

For example, 68.7 per cent of the public believe that Rawabdeh and his team can be highly successful in alleviating the country's economic burdens, whereas only seven months ago, only 53 per cent found the Tarawneh government capable of the task. In fact, the public showed substantially more confidence in the Rawabdeh government's capabilities in all categories than they did in the Tarawneh's. More than half believe the new team can successfully address the unemployment problem; 48.5 per cent believe it can successfully address poverty issues; 63.6 per cent believe it can very successfully confront corruption; 55 per cent believe he can

be successful in reforming the bureaucracy; and 42 per cent think he will successfully stem nepotism and "wasta." Opinion leaders showed less confidence in the government's ability to deal with these issues.

Conversely, opinion leaders showed more confidence in the government's ability to advance less tangible causes. More than 83 per cent of opinion leaders said the government would be successful in boosting national unity, versus 78.6 per cent of the general public.

The CSS has tracked opinion in region and city for all previous polls, but released them for the first time along with the survey of the Rawabdeh government after several requests to do so.

"People thought that because Rawabdeh is from Irbid, he would get the highest approval rating there and the lowest in the south," Hamarneh said, referring to a common perception that political preferences are dominated by tribal affiliation.

Hamarneh said that results of the four surveys have shown that this tendency is ebbing.

"We see a process of socialisation," he said.

The CSS will conduct a second poll on the Rawabdeh government after its first 100 days in office.

The CSS released for the first time results according

to region (north, central and south) and according to opinion in the major populated cities (Amman, Salt, Madaba, Zarqa, Irbid, Mafrak, Jerash, Ajloun, Karak, Tafileh, Ma'an and Aqaba).

Rawabdeh and team received the highest approval rating in Madaba (58 per cent of Madaba residents surveyed said his team will be highly successful) and the lowest (33.8 per cent) in Ma'an.

The CSS has tracked opinion in region and city for all previous polls, but released them for the first time along with the survey of the Rawabdeh government after several requests to do so.

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Lower House denounces Israeli plan to reduce water supplies

(Continued from page 1)

"If any party failed to be committed to the treaty, then the other party has the right to consider the agreement as null and void," Deputy Hmoud Khalayle told his colleagues.

"I request that the government freeze all other articles in the peace treaty," Khalayle added.

During the session, deputies used language in describing Israel reminiscent of the pre-treaty era, such as "Zionist enemy" and the "Zionist entity," a clear indication of their anger at Israeli government policy.

"I am not convinced of peace with the government of [Benyamin] Netanyahu... and I urge the government to reconsider the remaining articles of the peace treaty,"

Deputy Mijhim Sqour said. It was the first bitter popular criticism of Israel since His Majesty King Abdullah's accession to the Throne on Feb. 7 after the death of King Hussein.

In their petition, the deputies asked Parliament to present to Parliament a draft law to revoke the peace treaty.

"Israel's obstinacy was a fundamental breach of the treaty, a departure from commitments to Jordan and a violation of the basis of international and diplomatic norms," the petition said.

The treaty "has not achieved its inspired goals of helping the Arab Nation and the Arab people... but has portrayed us as serving Israeli interests," the motion said.

Prime Minister Abdur-

Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh reiterated that the government rejects the Israeli move and will insist on getting its full share of water from Israel.

"We will not accept even negotiating on the water deal," Rawabdeh said. "The government insists on getting its full share of water, and we are not ready to discuss the reasons that led the Israeli government to reconsider the water deal," the premier told the lawmakers.

He said that Jordan has "ways" to ensure its rights, adding that he will not close them at this stage.

Rawabdeh told deputies that the government will discuss on Saturday a general strategy to counter the shortage of water expected this summer because of low rainfall this winter.

He added that the strategy

will be submitted to the House for further discussion.

Israel said the regional drought has severely affected its reserves. But keen to maintain close ties with Jordan, Israel left the door open for further negotiations.

However, a meeting between senior water experts from both sides at the Dead Sea late Tuesday failed to reach a solution. Still, Jordanian officials said they sensed more flexibility from the Israeli team headed by Water Commissioner Meir Ben Meir.

Jordan, which announced a state of drought in January, depends heavily on rain to fill its dams and on water from Israel.

Officials are expected to announce water rationing and other contingency plans on Saturday.

Iraq rejects criticism from Gulf Arab FMs

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq on Wednesday rejected criticism from Gulf Arab foreign ministers of its failure to cooperate with the United Nations and accused Saudi Arabia and Kuwait of taking their orders from Washington.

The stand adopted by Gulf foreign ministers was proof of their "total submission to U.S. pressure and blackmail," an information ministry spokesman charged, quoted by the official news agency INA.

"The text was a copy of the U.S. position on Iraq," he said, noting it came only days after U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen toured the Gulf.

He said the statement adopted in the Saudi capital on Monday, two days ahead of a meeting of Arab foreign ministers in Cairo, was riddled with "shameless lies."

"It's not Iraq which is defying international resolutions, but the Saudi and Kuwaiti regimes, from whose bases U.S. and British planes take off to bomb Iraq and kill its sons," the spokesman said.

After a two-day meeting, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) — grouping Kuwait and Saudi Arabia with Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates — criticised Baghdad's refusal to

cooperate with three U.N. panels. They expressed "deep regret and concern at the persistence of the Iraqi government in defying international legitimacy."

The GCC also called on Baghdad to halt its threats against Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which allow British and U.S. warplanes to use bases on their territory to launch flights over "no-fly" zones over north and south Iraq.

"The Iraqi regime's continual threats reflect its indifference to the will of the Arab World and the international community," the ministers said.

Overestimating PCs

By Jean-Claude Elias

FLASHY BUZZWORDS like megahertz, gigabytes and super-micro-dot may make you think that the current Pentium PCs have enough power to handle any task you would throw at them. Admitted, they are more than powerful enough for common programmes like office suites (Word processing and the like), for browsing the Internet and doing routine office and home computing.

However, when it comes to processing digital photographs and sound, with professional quality, even the fastest Pentium CPU may seem slow. Processing motion pictures and video is even more demanding in terms of computing power.

Whereas "regular" Pentiums — whatever the model and the MHz — can satisfy amateurs and semi-pros, the real professionals use different computers. To name only one such maker, Silicon Graphics (SG) designs and produces machines based on different hardware and software than middle-of-the-road

PCs.

Particularly oriented towards those who work on motion graphics and animation, the SG systems cost 10 to 20 times more than the fastest Pentium or Macintosh. But for those who use them, they are worth every dollar. Overall, their performance is far superior to regular computers in every aspect — computing speed, input/output transfer rates, monitor sharpness and true colour rendition, stability and reliability of the system, and so forth. These are the machines used for instance to create special effects for the movie industry. The stunning effects we see in "Alien," "Flubber" or "The Fifth Element" are done on such stations.

The advertisements in computer magazines want us to believe that we can do all that with, say, a Pentium 300. Simply, it is not true: either we can't do it at all, or it will take such a long time to do the processing that we would lose all interest in the project.

For those who still want to process digital images, videos and music like pros do, but with a Pentium, the best

compromise consists of beefing up the machine as much as possible. Start with a Pentium 450 for example. Then install 256MB of memory (instead of the usual 32 or 64), a fast and large SCSI hard disk drive (8, 13 or 20 GB) and the best screen adapter you can find (available about JD200).

Such a configuration won't really compete with an SG station but with a little patience and a lot of talent, it will allow you to think of creating special effects for the next sequel of the "Titanic," in the comfort of your home and without breaking the bank.

Jean-Claude Elias can be reached by e-mail at jeanclaude@nets.com.jo

Iran optimistic about nuclear cooperation with Russia

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran said Wednesday it was confident its nuclear cooperation with Russia would continue, shortly before news broke that Moscow has decided to scale back its assistance to Tehran.

"We don't have any indication of a possible rupture in [Russia's] cooperation, and the two countries have very good relations," spokesman Hamid Reza Assefi said.

"Our atomic cooperation with Russia is of a peaceful nature, and under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency," Assefi told a news conference.

He spoke shortly before news broke that Moscow announced that it had decided to cut back nuclear cooperation with

Iran and expected the United States to lift sanctions against Russian institutes accused of supplying Tehran with sensitive technical know-how.

"I told them to end all contact with Iran," Atomic Energy Minister Yevgeny Adamov said of the Nuket Institute which is one of 10 facilities singled out by Washington for allegedly helping develop Iran's

nuclear programme.

The United States has been concerned that Russia wants to expand its nuclear cooperation with Iran and has opposed Moscow's decision to develop a nuclear reactor at Bushehr on the Persian Gulf.

Russia was completing one nuclear reactor at the site and being courted by Iran to build three more.

OPROEP AAN ALLE NEDERLANDERS IN HET BUITENLAND

Europese Parlementsverkiezingen 10 juni 1999

Op 10 juni 1999 zullen de verkiezingen voor het Europees Parlement worden gehouden. Iedere stemberechtigde Nederlander kan aan deze verkiezingen deelnemen, ook als hij of zij in het buitenland woont. Dat wil zeggen dat iedereen met de Nederlandse nationaliteit, ongeacht zijn of haar woonplaats, van 18 jaar of ouder in principe kan deelnemen.

MAAK GEBRUIK VAN UW STEMRECHT

- Hoe kunt u stemmen?

Om te kunnen stemmen moet u zich tijdig als kiezer registreren. Van 10 december 1998 tot en met 28 april 1999 kunt u zich bij de gemeente Den Haag laten opnemen in het kiezersregister voor de Europese Parlementsverkiezingen. De kiesregistratieformulieren zijn op aanvraag verkrijgbaar bij uw ambassade of consulaat. Tevens kunt u de formulieren terugvinden op de internet-site van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken.

Business & Finance

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Union Chemical & Vegetable Oil Industries Company generates JD1.4m gross profit from JD10.25m of sales

THE UNION Chemical & Vegetable Oil Industries Company generated a JD1.4 million gross profit last year out of total sales that amounted to JD10.25 million, 4.6 per cent less than the figure of 1997. Board Chairman Rajai Salfiti told the shareholders that the company was able to maintain the same level of local paint sales and to increase exports by 18 per cent.

Salfiti said sales of oil in the local market went up by 220 per cent from JD1.6 million in 1997 to JD3.5 million in 1998. He added that exports to Iraq declined by 55 per cent, from JD5.5 million to JD3.3 million in 1998 because the deals under the protocol between Jordan and Iraq were cancelled last year and only those related to the oil-for-food deals were kept. Salfiti described the latter deals as being of very low profitability margin.

The chairman highlighted the following main achievements during last year:

1) Importing 9,000 tonnes of sunflower seeds and producing "Al Qarya" oil and succeeding to selling it locally within six months

2) Implementing two contracts to supply 4,000 tonnes of palm oil to Iraq with the memorandum of oil-for-food deals in addition to 1,500 tonnes remaining from 1997

Salfiti announced the completion of some projects such as the expanding the storage capacity for the oils and the seeds and the installation of equipment to remove the colour and the smell for the refining. Many amendments were carried out on the production lines to ensure low-

ering costs, curbing losses, raising efficiency and maintaining good quality.

Regarding the paint factory (Rima Lux), the chairman said the company was able to keep its share of the paint market and even achieve a slight rise in sales despite the continued decline in the size of the paint market as a whole by over 20 per cent compared to 1997 and by 50 per cent compared to 1996. He indicated that exports to the countries in the region increased by 18 per cent especially to the markets of Saudi Arabia, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Salfiti told the shareholders that an agreement was signed with an international firm specialised in alkyl production for a technology transfer that would enable the company to produce many types of alkyls needed in the local and neighbouring markets in addition to the possibility of producing other types according to demand.

On the financial side, the chairman said the company will be using JD3.5 million from the sale of debentures to repay JD1 million of capital loans and to implement expansion projects as well as increase production capacity of oil refining.

The company's financial statements at the end of last year showed net profit at JD310,000 total current assets at JD6.6 million (JD5.1 million in 1997) and total assets at JD12.20 (JD10.5 million at the end of 1997).

Current liabilities totalled JD6.2 million (JD4.9 million) and shareholders equity totalled JD5.7 million (JD5.5 million) (Al Dustour + AJ Aswaq + AJ Arab Al Yawm).

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You hardly ever get your feelings hurt, but it could happen today. If so, the misunderstanding would most likely involve love and money, perhaps a gift you've given your sweetheart or one you're getting. Just focus on the love, and whatever it is will be perfect.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Venus is coming into your sign today, which is excellent for love and money. You'll be lucky in just about everything, except possibly communications. Check to make sure that what the other person heard is the same as what you thought you said.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) If you're confused, you're not the only one. In fact, you could be one of the smarter people today. A person who thinks the answer is simple could be making a big mistake. Don't just follow a strong leader blindly. Watch where you're going, and make sure its in the right direction.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You may be asked to account today for something you did recently. An older person just wants to make sure the job is getting done. Don't rely on information from a distant source. It could be erroneous. Tell them that, and you'll make extra points.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Be very careful with any large expenditure of money over the next few weeks. Looks like complications could arise, making it more trouble than its worth. In romance, commitments will become more important, and a previously frivolous relationship could become quite serious, much to your delight.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Someone you knew in the past could be coming into your life again. If so, it's like making new friends with an old friend. There are good times to talk over, but a couple of old misunderstandings need to be straightened out, too. Do that now, so you don't have to let the past mess up your future.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) There are rumours flying around your workplace. Be careful. Misinformation could cause hurt feelings. Don't gossip behind people's backs. It's never a good idea, and today it would be particularly destructive. If you wonder about something, ask people to their faces. The truth might be far different from what you imagine.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) An old misunderstanding with a loved one could resurface and need to be dealt with again. Make time for it; this time could be the last. There's a mountain of work to be done, but you should go through it quickly. Be a good listener today. It'll make everything easier.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) There may still be a few last touches to add, but that's to be expected. You can't really tell how a thing's going to look until you've got it up. There's no point being inhibited. Its all part of the creative process, to put in corrections as you notice they're needed. The overall result will look brilliant, so keep going until you get there.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) A couple of things happening today could turn out in your favour. Mercury is going retrograde into Pisces, helping you uncover old secrets. Venus, for love, is going into Taurus, helping you make romantic commitments. So you may discover a nice secret that leads to a romantic commitment.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Research is very important to you right now, along with old money. A friend's insight could set you going in a new direction. You're on a hunt for buried treasure, and you don't have far to go. Something near at hand is quite valuable. Its all in how you look at it.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) If you notice yourself pondering the past more in the next few weeks, its because Mercury is coming into your sign and its retrograde right now, so it causes contemplation of days gone by and lessons you should have learned. If you didn't learn them then, go ahead and learn them now.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, MARCH 19, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Most conditions indicate you can go full speed ahead today, and you certainly feel

like doing that, but you should be a little bit careful. One assumption that you've made could turn out to be false. So don't take anything for granted. Also, be careful with your money.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Your experience pays off today in more ways than one. Your skills give you increased status, but they could also bring in more money. Something you did years ago is needed by others now. Just find out who those others are, and bingo!

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Your energy level should be high today, but you should still be careful. Don't go racing off in all directions. Looks like you're not getting strong leadership now, so you'll have to provide it yourself. Don't just follow the person who's yelling the loudest. That would be downright ridiculous.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Your interrogation should be over by today, think heaven, and you'll be able to relax with friends soon. Make a date to do that. You need the rest and the support. You've taken on a tough challenge lately, and you may have wondered if you were doing it right. If you can avoid risking money, your chances improve considerably.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Although most conditions look good for you, there is one area you need to watch. Looks like a partner, possibly an expert you've hired, isn't quite everything he or she is supposed to be. Check out the credentials before you entrust this person with too much responsibility.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You're pretty good with money, but other people's money is more of a challenge. You have to deal not only with the numbers, but also with them, and their anxiety. That could be your assignment for today, don't let somebody else's emergency ruin your concentration. If all is not as it appears to be, it's not your fault. Do the best you can.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) There's a link between love and money today. If you pool your money with

Troubled firm recovers from financial crisis

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — The Jordan Spinning and Weaving Company is recovering from a financial crisis caused by alleged embezzlement after a government-appointed board of directors managed to cut production costs and to find new markets

in the market. "The company needs around JD1 million to modernise its machines in order to double the production capacity and meet soaring demand," Emrani told the Jordan Times.

"During the past five months the company exported around JD1.5 million worth of goods to the international market," under a drive to explore new markets including Iraq, Syria and the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

"In five months, the company increased its daily production output to 5.5 tonnes from 2.8 tonnes," he said.

The company was planning to increase output to 7.2 tonnes a day in order to meet market demand.

Emrani said 50 more workers were added to the company's payroll, raising the number to 340 staff.

"The cost of production was lowered by 54 per cent through increasing production capacity and manufacturing spare parts locally,"

Emrani told the Jordan Times.

"The reduction in the cost of production enabled us to compete in the international markets and to establish a better name in Greece, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and Germany," added Emrani.

"The Palestinian National Authority offered to buy all of our production but the company refused the offer because it preferred not to depend on one market," he said.

The board — seen then by many businessmen as an attempt to liquidate the company — took over after the prosecutor general claimed a JD 5 million embezzlement.

The Criminal Court is looking into alleged fraud involving 17 men, including Maher Shukri, a former senior banker.

Emrani blamed the past crisis on frequent changes at the company's managerial level and lack of professionals working there.

Hourani, decided last November to dissolve the company's board of directors and appoint a new management, comprised of representatives from the private and the public sectors.

A.S.E TRADE

Wednesday, 17-03-99

ACCESS 4646868

Company	Open	Close	Change
BANKS			
ARAB BK	222,000	222,000	0.00%
NTL BK	1,440	1,430	-0.65%
BL. OF JORDAN	1,280	1,280	-0.78%
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1,400	1,350	-1.43%
THE HOUSING BK	2,800	2,800	0.00%
JO. KUWAIT BK	1,650	1,650	+0.65%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1,650	1,670	+0.60%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0,520	0,520	0.00%
BANKS INDEX			
	287,540	point =	-0.05%
INSURANCE			
JERUSALEM INS	1,300	1,350	+4.62%
JO. FRENCH INS	2,670	2,700	+1.12%
ALHIA INS	1,000	1,050	+5.00%
INSURANCE INDEX			
	126,680	point =	+0.74%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1,660	1,640	-1.20%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0,910	0,920	+1.10%
AL-RAT	7,050	7,050	0.00%
AL-ZARGA FOR EDU	0,980	0,980	0.00%
ARAB INT'L FOR INVEST. & ED	1,930	1,950	+1.04%
UNITED FOR FINANCIAL INVE	1,080	1,080	0.00%
SERVICES INDEX			
	113,420	point =	+0.03%
INDUSTRY			
CEMENT	3,670	3,660	-0.27%
PHOSPHATE	2,230	2,250	+0.90%
ARAB POTASH	4,280	4,280	0.00%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10,770	10,750	-0.19%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	2,950	3,000	+1.67%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1,450	1,460	+0.67%
PAPER & CARDBOARD	1,450	1,450	0.00%
INT'L STEEL	0,550	0,550	0.00%
DAR AL DAWA	6,100	6,080	-0.33%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0,550	0,550	0.00%
JO STEEL	1,550	1,550	0.00%
ARAB ALUMINUM	1,650	1,650	0.00%
LILY FLOCK & POULTRY	0,400	0,380	-2.50%
PETRO CHEMICAL	0,260	0,260	0.00%
CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL	1,100	1,060	-3.64%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	0,920	0,920	0.00%
NTL CABLE	0,500	0,500	0.00%
SULPHO - CHEMICALS	0,420	0,420	0.00%
KATHWER	0,470	0,480	+2.22%
EL-ZAY	1,260	1,260	0.00%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0,600	0,580	-3.33%
IND. RESOURCES	0,410	0,420	+2.44%
NEW CAPLES	0,580	0,580	0.00%
NTL ALUMINUM	0,780	0,780	0.00%
INDUSTRY INDEX			
	96,350	point =	+0.02%
PARALLEL			
EXPORT BK 75Z	0,960	0,930	-2.11%
UNION INVES. CORP	0,870	0,830	-4.60%
ARAB FINANCIAL INVES	0,500	0,510	+2.00%
AL - EKBAL	0,870	0,870	0.00%
ADVANCED PHAR	0,510	0,510	0.00%
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0,490	0,480	-2.04%

Big names to stroll on in Cup Winners Cup

PARIS (AFP) — Barring a miracle, the remaining big names should take their place in the European Cup Winners' Cup semifinals Thursday before the death knell sounds for what has become an increasingly unglamorous event.

English holders Chelsea, Lazio of Italy and Russia's Lokomotiv Moscow all posted big wins in their first legs a fortnight ago, ensuring that the tournament will belatedly comprise some glamour ties in the semis.

Chelsea's European experience should stand them in good stead as they head for Valerenga in Norway, three goals to the good from the first leg at Stamford Bridge.

Knocked out of the FA Cup last week by Manchester United and beaten at home by West Ham in the Premiership, Gianluca Vialli's side are now focusing in on becoming the first side ever to retain the Cup Winners' Cup.

Several sides, including Arsenal and Paris St. Germain in recent seasons, have failed at the final hurdle.

But Chelsea have enjoyed quite a Cup Winners' Cup love affair. They won the trophy for the first time back in 1971 beating Real Madrid in a final replay and Valerenga should not overly test them.

The Blues had an unhappy mid-winter visit to Tromso on the Arctic Circle for their last trip to Norway, losing 3-2 in a snowstorm after Vialli rescued an apparently hopeless situation with two goals.

But buoyed by goals from Bahayro, Zola and Wise in the first match, the Londoners should be able to spend Thursday evening in the comfort zone afforded by the size of that home victory.

Vialli expects his side to bounce back from their recent defeats and add to their growing silverware collection under the Italian's stewardship.

"I expect a great reaction from the players and myself as well. It's possibly the first time we've had a bad time so it's a test for me as well," said Vialli, now no doubt dreaming of a final showdown with his Lazio compatriots.

Chelsea's injury problems are mounting as the season enters its final phase with Marcel Desailly doubtful after picking up a hamstring problem against West Ham. Long-term injury victims Gustavo Poyet and Pierluigi Casiraghi are definitely out.

But Vialli has defended his decision not to sign any replacements.

"The club asked me if I wanted a replacement and I said I was happy with the squad I had at the time. If there's a mistake, it's my mistake — but four days ago everything was going well."

Lazio, the biggest threat standing in Chelsea's way, ought to coast through in Rome against the Greeks of Panionios whom they crushed 4-0 in Athens.

The Rome outfit are unbeaten in 15 matches in the Serie A, although they have had to put their championship

champagne on ice after dropping two points at tailenders Empoli on Sunday.

Coach Sven Goran Eriksson is not ringing the alarm bells as a result, however, and can afford the luxury of giving Christian Vieri a rest if he so wishes as the Italian international striker, a late sub against Empoli, is not match fit.

Even if Vieri doesn't start, Lazio

have enough firepower in the likes of Chilean star Marcelo Salas to complete a triumph which appears a foregone conclusion.

Lokomotiv Moscow like Chelsea and Lazio, have one foot in the last four after blasting Maccabi Haifa of Israel 3-0 at home thanks to a Zaza Dzhaniashvili hat-trick.

Haifa have done well to reach this stage, given that they were banded what was on paper a difficult first-round tie against Paris Saint Germain.

But Lokomotiv have proved a tougher obstacle to crack than the French and they should progress without much trouble as they seek to become the first — and last — Russian winners of the competition.

Spain's Real Mallorca host the virtual unknowns of Croatia's Varteks Varazdin in the remaining tie — the only one whose outcome remains in the balance with the first match having finished goalless.

Mallorca tuned up for the match with a 2-1 win at Atletico Madrid which keeps them in the Spanish title frame in fourth place, five points behind pace-setters Barcelona.

Parma eclipse Bordeaux as Marseille keep French flag flying

PARIS (AFP) — Italy, France and Spain enjoyed mixed fortunes in the UEFA Cup on Wednesday as Parma turned in the performance of the night, thrashing Bordeaux 6-0 to book a place in the last four.

Bologna became a second Italian name in the hat for the semifinal draw, ousting another French outfit in the shape of Lyon 3-2 on aggregate despite losing the away leg 2-0.

But Roma failed to make it an Italian hat-trick when they made a surprise exit after sliding to a 2-1 home defeat to Atletico Madrid, who came from behind to register a 4-2 aggregate triumph.

Marseille kept the French flag flying in the other tie, holding out for an uninspiring goalless draw at Celta Vigo to advance 2-1 on aggregate.

Parma, who lifted the trophy in 1995, are gunning for success on two fronts as they lie second in Serie A behind Lazio.

And on Tuesday evening's evidence, they are the side to fear, having brushed aside a Bordeaux side sitting proudly atop the French first division table.

Beaten 2-1 in France, Parma played Bordeaux off the pitch at the Tardini stadium, with Enrico Chiesa scoring twice and Parma's Argentinian Hernan Crespo (2), Juan Sebastian Veron and Abel Balbo getting the rest in a match which was one-way traffic throughout.

The Italian side were simply in a different class to their French opponents, who gave up the ghost once they went three goals down in the face of the Italians' clinical finishing.

Crespo hit the first in the 37th minute and although Bordeaux nearly levelled in the 41st minute when Herve Alicante sent in a barrel-rolling drive, Chiesa made it 2-0 just before the break with a stunning shot from distance.

Three minutes after the restart, Veron blasted home a free-kick from the left and, as the French surrendered, Chiesa poked home the fourth through keeper Ulrich Rame's legs.

Parma's fifth goal came when Frenchman Lillian Thuram punted the ball upfield to Paolo Vanoli, who headed on for Crespo. He nonchalantly trapped the ball before guiding it home.

French defender Nisa Saveljic then handballed in the final seconds and substitute Balbo fired home the penalty to complete the rout for Parma's biggest ever win in European competition.

Bologna's success was a far more muted affair as they just survived a Lyon onslaught after conceding two first half goals before bolting the door on the French side's hopes.

The French were much the better side and played the Italians off the park in the opening period.

They took a deserved lead on 16 minutes as they went in



AS Roma captain Francesco Totti (L) is brought down by Oscar Mena of Atletico Madrid, during their UEFA Cup quarterfinal second leg soccer match at the Olympic stadium (AFP photo)



Parma's Argentinian Hernan Crespo (C, L) is celebrated by teammates after he scored his team's first goal against Bordeaux during their UEFA Cup quarterfinal second leg match in Parma. Parma won 6-0 (AFP photo)

crossbar before the final whistle brought ultimate relief for the Italians and despair for their hosts.

The night took a turn for the better for French fans when former European champions Marseille eked out a 0-0 draw in Vigo, having won the home leg 2-1 through two Florian Maurice goals.

Roma spoilt the evening for Italy when they allowed Atletico Madrid to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat in a stormy return in the Olympic stadium.

Roma beaten 2-1 in Spain, shot themselves in the foot by having two men dismissed — Cameroon defender Pierre Wome in the 28th minute and skipper Francesco Totti in injury-time for protesting — his second bookable offence.

By then it was too late as the Spaniards, bolstered by an inspired showing from keeper Jose Molina, had long since rallied following Marco Delvecchio's opener for the Italians on the half hour.

Carlos Aguilera volleyed home a superb 58th minute equaliser to rock the home crowd, whose mood darkened still further when Delvecchio had a goal disallowed.

Roberto delivered the knockout-blow in the 89th minute.

WBC claims Lewis was robbed of 'clear victory'

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — The World Boxing Council (WBC) claimed Tuesday its heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis, was robbed of his "clear victory" against World Boxing Association (WBA) rival Evander Holyfield in their unification battle.

Britain's Lewis out-classed American Evander Holyfield for 12 rounds in New York Saturday only to be denied the undisputed world heavyweight boxing title when judges scored the fight a draw in a decision that triggered a major controversy.

"Lewis was unjustly robbed of a clear victory," the Mexico City-based WBC said in a statement, calling for a rematch with "clearer rules."

It said that Lewis "massacred" Holyfield with an endless number of devastating blows."

The WBC joined widespread criticism of WBA-appointed referee Eugenia Williams, who gave the fight to Holyfield.

"Our explanation is the little experience Ms. Williams has for a fight of this level and an excessive favouritism for a boxer of her own country."

Williams complained that she had a poor view and mainly saw Lewis' back during the hotly criticised fifth round in which Lewis landed 43 punches to 11 for Holyfield but still lost to the American on Williams' scorecard.



Tottenham Hotspur's French forward David Ginola (L) is held back by Barnsley's Nicky Eaden during their FA Cup quarterfinal match (AFP photo)

Ginola grabs glittering glory goal

LONDON (AFP) — Tottenham's French star David Ginola scored a breathtakingly brilliant goal to secure a 1-0 win and book a place for the London side in the FA Cup semifinals at first division Barnsley Tuesday night.

Ginola's 68th minute winner to kill off Barnsley's FA Cup dreams was spellbinding, a work of pure genius which will be recalled for a long time after by those who witnessed it, Tottenham and Barnsley fans alike.

Barnsley had been reduced to 10 men just nine minutes prior to what will arguably be goal of the season.

Defender Adie Moses of Barnsley saw red for two fouls on Ginola in the space of a minute.

At that point the Frenchman had shown only glimpses of his talent, although he had created a glorious opportunity for

Ramon Vega.

The Swiss defender not only spurned the chance but missed the ball completely.

Ginola finally decided to illuminate the hitherto dull proceedings with a semifinal goal with just 22 minutes remaining.

It wouldn't have mattered if Barnsley had 22 men on the pitch at the time as the Frenchman turned on the flair to twist and shimmy his way past a series of despairing challenges before applying the coolest of finishes.

While Bullock did not have much to do, opposing number Ian Walker saw even less action, making just one save before the interval as both attacks had sufficient service.

However, Spurs captain Sol Campbell had to make one crucial tackle on Bruce Dyer after a gaffe from Vega had given the Barnsley striker a goal.

Ginola received applause from all corners of the ground when he was eventually substituted by Andy Sinton with just a minute

remaining.

In the early stages both sides had appeared tentative which was hardly surprising with a semifinal goal against Newcastle at stake.

Nicky Eaden had Ginola under close scrutiny in the early stages as both sides hardly mustered an attack of note.

Bullock then made an easy save from Chris Armstrong, who should really have done better with his shot.

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remaining.

Vigo continued to push and almost snatched dramatic goal in injury time when Bosnian substitute Vladimir Gudelj drove the ball across the goal but a flurry of Vigo legs failed to get the telling touch.

Roma spoilt the evening for Italy when they allowed Atletico Madrid to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat in the Olympic stadium.

Roma beaten 2-1 in Spain, shot themselves in the foot by having two men dismissed — Cameroon defender Pierre Wome in the 28th minute and skipper Francesco Totti in injury-time for protesting — his second bookable offence.

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Roberto delivered the knockout-blow in the 89th minute.

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Sports

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7 countries in taekwondo competition starting today

AMMAN — Around 390 taekwondo players from seven Arab and Asian countries will mark the 40-day mourning period of the passing away of His Majesty King Hussein by competing in a two-day international championship starting Thursday. Players from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Chinese Taipei and Jordan will participate in the First Amman International Championship for men and women, organised by Jordan's Champions Centre for taekwondo at the Palace of Sports. Twenty-two international referees from Hong Kong, Egypt, Yemen, Qatar, Cyprus, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Lebanon, Sweden and Jordan will be officiating the matches.

Surface maintenance to cost JD186,000

AMMAN — The Greater Jerusalem Foundation will begin maintenance and rehabilitation of sport facilities at Al Hussein Youth City as preparations for the Pan-Arab Games after the firm won a JD186,000 tender. Work will include replacing rubber floors of the Sports Palace, handicapped centre and weightlifting hall, as well as conducting electricity maintenance and renovation and construction works at the shooting club.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

Rockets avenge embarrassing loss to Blazers; Cavs win

HOUSTON (R) — A Houston Rockets team focused on avenging a humiliating loss put together a solid effort from start to finish and beat the Portland Trail Blazers 101-93 on Tuesday.

Hakeem Olajuwon scored 21 points to lead five players in double figures and the Rockets used a big third quarter to put away the Blazers, who had embarrassed the Rockets 111-71 earlier this month in Portland.

"I like the way we won the game," Olajuwon said. "It was a total team effort. Everyone was focused on one goal, winning."

Scottie Pippen had 18 points, seven rebounds, nine assists and three steals for the Rockets, who have won six of their last eight games.

Charles Barkley contributed 15 points and nine rebounds, including the 12,000th rebound of his career to become just the 15th player in NBA history to reach the plateau.

"God has blessed me with great talents and it's an honour to accomplish it," Barkley said of his milestone rebound total.

Houston held a slim 54-51 advantage at the half but exploded with an 18-4 run to start the third quarter. The Rockets outscored Portland 26-12 in the period to take a commanding 80-63 lead into the fourth.

In Toronto, new coach, same old New Jersey Nets. A day after Don Casey replaced fired John Calipari as head coach, the Nets shot a miserable 37 per cent and failed to show up on defence in 100-85 loss to the Toronto Raptors.

"A change of coach is not a magic wand," Casey said. Vince Carter had 20

points and 15 rebounds. Doug Christie scored 18 points and Dee Brown added 17 as Toronto led by as many as 27 points and coasted to victory.

In Miami, Tim Hardaway scored 11 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter as the Heat recorded their 11th straight home victory, a 94-85 win over the Washington Wizards.

Alonzo Mourning added 19 points and 14 rebounds for the Heat, who have won

five straight games and 16 of 18.

The Wizards nearly erased a 20-point second-half deficit, pulling within 82-77 in the final period. But Hardaway took over, helping to build the Miami lead back to 88-77.

Mitch Richmond scored 22 points and Juwan Howard added 18 for Washington.

In Sacramento, Tim Duncan had 29 points and 12 rebounds to lead the San Antonio Spurs to their best offensive effort of the season, a 121-109 victory over the Kings.

Mario Elie added 23 points and Avery Johnson collected 17 points and 15 assists for San Antonio, which had all five starters score at least 17.

San Antonio's winning streak reached eight games, their longest in almost three years.

At Indiana, Dikembe Mutombo pulled down 20 rebounds and made a key play in the closing seconds to help the Atlanta Hawks post an 85-79 victory over the Pacers. Unable to grab the rebound of a missed free throw by teammate Mookie Blaylock, Mutombo batted the ball off. Indiana's Jalen Rose and out of bounds with 11 seconds left.

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Samaranch firmly in charge after stunning vote of confidence

LAUSANNE (AFP) — Beleaguered International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Juan Antonio Samaranch firmly secured his position as head of the movement when he won a sweeping vote of confidence from IOC members here on Wednesday.

The 78-year-old had asked for a show of support in his leadership before the start of the most dramatic meeting ever held by the IOC — one that will decide the fate of six members embroiled in the Salt Lake City scandal — amid rumours of top officials plotting to oust him.

Samaranch, who has ruled the Olympic movement for 18 years, decided to crush any opposition by deciding to put his support within the movement to the test with a secret vote.

It was a gamble that paid off with stunning success.

With 90 members voting, 88 backed the former Spanish diplomat. Only two voiced opposition. There was one abstention and one blank voting slip.

Samaranch left the hall while the vote was being taken and when it was over he swept back into the room to a standing ovation.

Belgian executive board member Jacques Rogge, tipped as a possible successor to Samaranch, said afterwards: "The outcome is good for the Olympic movement. The decision to conduct a secret ballot was a good one. It showed the true strength of the president's support from the members."

Samaranch has repeatedly refused to stand down following the corruption scandal that has severely tarnished the once-golden image of the Olympics.

Wednesday's vote will now allow him to stay on until his retirement in 2001.

With doubts over the future of the leadership put to rest, the meeting began the job of trying the six members facing expulsion for their part in the Salt Lake City corruption scandal.

Immediately after the Salt Lake affair broke late last year, IOC vice-president Dick Pound was put in charge of a six-man inquiry team.

The Pound inquiry uncovered more than a score of cases where members were found to have broken the strict IOC code of ethics.

Six of them should be expelled, said the report

and Samaranch made clear that he wanted the members to show no mercy.

"We must root out all forms of inappropriate or unethical behaviour among our membership and expel those members (as) recommended by the executive board," said Samaranch at the start of Wednesday morning's hearing.

He accused the six of almost bringing the IOC to its knees.

"No-one thought that certain of our members would act in a manner which would eventually bring the IOC into disrepute — in fact into a crisis which has nearly destroyed the reputation and credibility of all its members and the organisation itself," he told the session.

Pound earlier warned that if all six are not thrown out, he and the rest



International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF) president Primo Nebiolo (L) shakes hands with International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Juan Antonio Samaranch in Lausanne. The 78-year-old Samaranch won today a sweeping vote of confidence from IOC members before the start of the most dramatic meeting ever held by the IOC (AFP photo)

IOC expels six members in Olympic corruption scandal

LAUSANNE (AFP) — Six International Olympic Committee members were expelled here Wednesday for their role in the Salt Lake City corruption scandal.

They are Agustin Arroyo of Ecuador, General Zein El Abdin Ahmed of the Sudan, Congo's Jean Claude Ganga, Mali's Lamine Keita, Chile's Sergio Santander Fanti and Paul Wallwork of Samoa.

All were found guilty by a six-man IOC inquiry of accepting excessive gifts or cash for themselves or family members during Salt Lake City's successful bid for the 2002 Winter Olympics. The 11-strong IOC executive board had recommended their expulsion, which was confirmed by the IOC at an afternoon press conference.

IOC First Vice-President Pal Schmitt was given the task of telling the six, waiting in a nearby room, that they were out.

"All of them were very sad and upset. Mr Wallwork was crying," said Schmitt.

Four other members resigned earlier this year rather than face the IOC court and 10 others, including the powerful South Korean IOC Vice-President Kim Un-yong, were censured for their behaviour.

IOC vice-president Dick Pound, who headed the corruption inquiry, said the Kim case was still open and

that he was still under investigation. Pound said Wednesday's expulsions showed the IOC was determined to change.

"We are starting to deliver, to put our house in order," he said.

"We are at the end of the beginning, or near the end of the beginning. I think we have a fair amount of work ahead of us to recover and regroup and move on. I think this is a good start and while it was painful for us to do it I think had we not done it would have been very hard to move forward."

It is the first time in the IOC's 105-year history that members have been thrown out for corruption.

All six pleaded their case before the special session of 91 members meeting here.

Any hopes of sympathy from their fellow members were quickly dispelled by IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch.

Before the hearing began, the 78-year-old Samaranch told the session that its job was clear.

"We must clean our house. We must root out all forms of inappropriate or unethical behaviour among our membership and expel those members recommended by the executive board," said Samaranch.

He accused the six of almost bringing the IOC to its knees.

"No-one thought that certain of

our members would act in a manner which would eventually bring the IOC into disrepute — in fact into a crisis which has nearly destroyed the reputation and credibility of all its members and the organisation itself," he said.

The verdicts were reached by secret ballot.

Samaranch had wanted a show of hands but it was bitterly opposed by the rank and file and they swept the floor to have their vote kept secret.

After the accused had pleaded their case, Samaranch and Pound warned the members that tough action needed to be taken and not to go soft.

Pound told them that while they may have felt some compassion for the accused members they should not shirk from their task. "We have to keep a clean house," he told them.

Several of the members were clearly unhappy at what they saw as strong armed tactics.

"Justice was not done here today. Only the weakest were picked up," complained Italian IOC member Franco Carraro.

"What has happened to those who tempted them," he asked.

Thai member Nat Indrapana made an impassioned plea to the session.

"Let us put an end to this blood letting. It is time to draw a line and move on," he urged.

footing, in tune with society and its expectations for the leadership of the Olympic movement," said Samaranch.

He added that the group will be 20 to 24 strong with half of them coming from outside the IOC.

NFL owners create 32nd team for LA

PHOENIX (AFP) — National Football League owners voted 29-2 here Tuesday to expand to Los Angeles, returning to the second largest United States television market from which two other clubs fled.

The expansion team was granted provided the city meets stadium and finance criteria within six months, goals all but assured with a team valued at hundreds of millions of dollars on the line.

NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue disclosed the vote to return to an area that once hosted two teams but has been without any NFL club since the Raiders went to Oakland and Rams left for St. Louis in 1995.

Houston was also a candidate and had a single ownership group in place with a \$350 million stadium one-third complete in the fourth largest U.S. television market, with 1.6 million homes.

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Shas leader Deri convicted of corruption

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Rabbi Arieh Deri, a former interior minister who heads Israel's third largest party, was convicted Wednesday of corruption in a verdict that rocked the country two months before national elections.

Deri, 40, was found guilty of accepting bribes, fraud and breach of trust between 1985 and 1990 when he was director general and then minister at the interior ministry. The trial lasted five years.

A leader of the ultra-Orthodox Sephardi party Shas and one of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's most important political allies, Deri faces a possible prison term and fines, although the sentence will not be announced until next week at the earliest.

Deri's lawyer said he would appeal the conviction to the supreme court once the sentence is set. If his conviction is upheld, Deri will be ineligible to serve as a minis-

ter for 10 years.

"We were surprised by the gravity of the ruling, which we reject completely," said attorney Navot Tel Tzur.

Deri's wife, Yafa, broke into sobs when the verdict was read but the bearded and bespectacled rabbi withheld comment.

Shas held 10 seats in the outgoing 120-member parliament and has long played the role of powerbroker in government as the main representative of Israel's large but underprivileged community of Sephardim — Jews from North African and Middle Eastern origin.

Netanyahu, who is lagging behind opposition Labour Party chief Ehud Barak in opinion polls and needs the Sephardi vote to win reelection, responded cautiously to the verdict.

"Israel is a state of law and we must respect the court's ruling," he said.

"I hope no one will rejoice over Arieh's conviction," he said, before calling on Deri's

supporters "to show restraint and respect the law."

Hundreds of extra police were deployed around the Jerusalem courthouse to handle possible unrest from Shas militants after the verdict.

But just a few dozen people turned out and only a few minor scuffles were reported after Deri and other religious leaders appealed for calm.

Police also placed additional bodyguards around Tzemah and another judge after they received telephone death threats Tuesday.

Deri was found guilty of accepting \$155,000 in bribes from business associates between 1985 and 1990 when he served first as director general of the interior ministry and then minister.

He used the bribes to help

purchase apartments in Jerusalem and finance trips abroad with his wife, the court found.

Deri was also convicted of fraud concerning the use of state funds to bail out religious institutions and busi-

ness activities controlled by him and three associates who were also convicted.

The three-judge panel found Deri innocent on some other charges including falsifying corporate documents.

Deri still faces indictment on other charges of corruption, notably involving his ill-fated 1997 nomination by Netanyahu of a political crony as attorney general in a deal allegedly designed to obtain a plea-bargain in Deri's bribery trial.

Deri's decade-old legal problems have captivated Israelis' attention and in a sign of the case's political implications Wednesday's verdict was exceptionally broadcast live on national radio.

Television cameras were barred from the courtroom but the two main networks broadcast special programmes on the Deri affair.

The verdict came exactly two months before May 17 general elections and could have a major impact for

Shas, which has served in virtually every government — right or left — since its creation in 1984 and had two ministers in Netanyahu's cabinet.

Shas supporters claim Deri's conviction is the latest sign of long-standing persecution of Sephardim by the secular Ashkenazi, or European, elite which has traditionally dominated Israeli politics.

"We'll win 20 seats in parliament this time," said one supporter of Shas, which runs a vast network of welfare and education programmes in the Sephardi community.

But television analyst Hanan Cristal disagreed.

"The verdict won't shake the Shas hard-core, but the corruption charges could alienate the silent majority of Shas voters," he said.

Analysts said many former Shas voters could defect to the new centre party headed by the Iraqi-born ex-defence minister Yitzhak Mordechai.



Israeli commission begins redrawing Jerusalem borders

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel's interior ministry formed a panel Wednesday to prepare for expanding the borders of Jerusalem westward in a move designed to boost the Jewish population of the Arab city.

The commission will examine the annexation of land from neighbouring Israeli regions to the Jerusalem municipality, interior ministry spokeswoman Tova Ellinson said in a statement.

The expansion of Jerusalem was approved by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government in June and drew protests from residents of several residential suburbs targeted for annexation to the occupied city.

The commission appointed Wednesday will initially look at non-built up areas that could be attached to Jerusalem, Ellinson said.

In taking its decision in June, the government said a key aim was to boost the Jewish population of Jerusalem, which is divided between a Jewish western sector and Arab east Jerusalem — a zone occupied from Jordan in 1967 and later illegally annexed.

Since 1967, the Palestinian population of the city has risen 164 per cent while the Jewish population grew only 113 per cent, according to Israeli statistics.

The city's current population is about 600,000, around 200,000 of them Palestinians living in Arab east Jerusalem.

Another aim of the expansion plan, which the right-wing government hopes will eventually include annexing parts of the occupied West Bank to Jerusalem, is to provide new sources of tax revenue for the cash-strapped municipal government.

Under the Oslo peace accords, Israel agreed to negotiate the status of the city, but Netanyahu has ruled out any concessions.

Palestinian officials say Israel strengthening settlements

AL BIREH (R) — Palestinian officials on Wednesday accused Israel of speeding up Jewish settlement building in order to strengthen its hold on West Bank land before talks on a final peace settlement.

"We have found that the Israeli government has accelerated the construction of settlements, especially in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, in order to create facts on the ground and grab more occupied land before final status talks begin," said Palestinian negotiator Khalil Toftaki.

Toftaki, who monitors settlement trends, told a news conference that according to his estimates the settler population was growing at an annual rate of nine per cent.

Three days after U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross called Israeli settlement "very destructive to the pursuit of peace," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday pledged to strengthen Jewish settlement in the West Bank.

Such promises have irritated Palestinians who see settlement expansion as an illegal violation of Israeli-Palestinian peace accords.

"They are swallowing up our lands for settlements and depleting our natural resources," said Palestinian Environment Minister Yousef Abu Safyeh.

Israeli peace groups and Palestinians have said several new settlements have sprouted on hilltops throughout the West

Bank under the guise of natural growth.

Around 160,000 Jewish settlers live in roughly 150 settlements throughout the occupied West Bank and Gaza, which Israel occupied in 1967.

Under the 1993 Oslo peace deals, the issue of settlements was slated for discussion during final status talks that were meant to be completed by May of this year.

Toftaki said Israel was also accelerating the approval of settlement construction plans frozen by the previous Labour government and that Israel was "building new settlements and not just expanding existing ones as it claims."

A U.S. embassy spokesman in Tel Aviv said on Tuesday that

Washington was troubled by settlement expansion beyond existing boundaries.

"All building is within the municipal boundaries of these communities," said Netanyahu's senior adviser David Bar-Ilan.

Eli Cohen, a former Israeli defence ministry adviser on settlements, told the Jerusalem Post newspaper last week the government had issued permits in 1998 that would enable construction of tens of thousands of new settlement units.

Mossi Raz head of the left-wing Israeli Peace Now movement, said the right-wing Israeli government had built 16 new settlements in the last five months in the West Bank and 20 in total since last year.

Iraq sends second flight of pilgrims to S. Arabia

Agencies

NEARLY 18,000 Iraqis gathered at a border point with Saudi Arabia Wednesday and a government official accused the United Nations of delaying plans for financing their pilgrimage to Mecca.

"About 18,000 Iraqi citizens headed on Wednesday to the border point of Arafat... anxious to participate along with millions of Muslim brotherhood in this year's Hajj," the ministry of culture and information official said in a statement read to reporters.

He said Iraq had asked a U.N. Sanctions Committee on Iraq to allow it to draw \$2,000 per pilgrim from revenues of its so-called oil-for-food programme.

The United Nations says the sanctions — imposed over Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait

Nations.

"But the Sanctions Committee has instead followed a policy of procrastination and delayed the legitimate Iraqi demand," the official said.

In New York, chairman of the Sanctions Committee on Iraq, Ambassador Peter van Walsum of the Netherlands, told reporters that the United Nations abandoned efforts on Tuesday to work out a plan to enable up to 22,000 Iraqi pilgrims to make the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca without travel sanctions.

Earlier in the day, Iraq sent the second of three planned flights carrying pilgrims to Saudi Arabia in defiance of a U.N. air embargo and a Western-imposed no-fly zone.

A Russian-built Illyushin-76 plane took off with 111 pilgrims from a military airport in southern Baghdad.

The head of Iraqi Airways, Rabiae Mohammad Saleh, thanked Saudi Arabian authorities for allowing a similar plane

— bar it from transferring the money through Iraq's central bank. It has proposed transferring the cash through a third party, Iraq has rejected this.

"Iraq is sticking to its demand and it knows that creating the game of a third party... is meant to prevent Iraqis from performing Hajj," the Iraqi official said.

Earlier in the day, Iraq sent the second of three planned flights carrying pilgrims to Saudi Arabia in defiance of a U.N. air embargo and a Western-imposed no-fly zone.

Also Wednesday, Saudi Arabia turned down a U.S. request to seize the Iraqi Airways plane which flew in the Muslim pilgrims bound for Mecca despite a U.N. embargo.

Wassila Khalil, a woman in her 60s, was wounded during the first raid which caught her outside, and taken to the government hospital in Tyre, a Western diplomatic source said.

Lebanese woman wounded in Israeli attack

TYRE (AFP) — A Lebanese woman was wounded Wednesday and eight homes damaged when Israeli aircraft bombed a suspected Hezbollah stronghold north of the Jewish state's south Lebanon "security zone," police said.

Fighter-bombers fired 16 missiles around Zibqine and Aishiyeh villages in three passes that took place within half an hour beginning at 5:30 p.m. according to police.

Also Wednesday, Saudi Arabia turned down a U.S. request to seize the Iraqi Airways plane which flew in the Muslim pilgrims bound for Mecca despite a U.N. embargo.

Wassila Khalil, a woman in her 60s, was wounded during the first raid which caught her outside, and taken to the government hospital in Tyre, a Western diplomatic source said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Barak voted premier by students

TEL AVIV (AFP) — In mock elections that have served in the past as an accurate barometer of Israeli voting trends, Tel Aviv high school students chose Labour Party leader Ehud Barak for prime minister Wednesday over incumbent Benjamin Netanyahu. In the vote at Tel Aviv's Blich High School, Barak trounced Netanyahu for the premiership with 56 per cent of the ballots to only 25 per cent for the prime minister and the rest spread out among other candidates. The mock vote at Blich has become a tradition prior to Israeli elections and most years the students accurately predict the result of the national polls. Their only failure came ahead of the May 1996 elections when they forecast that Labour incumbent Shimon Peres would be reelected.

Police arrest suspected bombmakers

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian police have arrested a gang of four or five suspected bombmakers for the militant Islamic group Hamas in the Gaza Strip, security officials said on Wednesday. The gang members, all of them from the south of Gaza, were arrested three weeks ago in possession of commercial materials that could be used to make a bomb but before an explosive device could be manufactured, an official said. The official refused to specify exactly how many men were arrested and named only one of the gang as Imad Mohammad Ali, 22, from the Bureij refugee camp.

Arafat to visit Moscow on April 6

MOSCOW (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat is to visit Moscow on April 6 for talks with Russian leaders. ITAR-TASS reported Wednesday. The report quoted Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian number two, as saying that the talks were part of Arafat's consultations on whether to proclaim a Palestinian state when the interim autonomy period expires.

Turkey seeks measures against Med-TV

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey on Wednesday asked diplomatic representatives of Germany and Britain in Ankara to take measures against Med-TV, which it says provoked the recent string of bloody attacks to hit the country since the capture of Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan last month. "We have convened our opinion on the issue once again to the German Ambassador [Hans-Joachim Vergau] and the British Charge d'Affaires [Hugh Mortimer]," a spokesman for the Turkish foreign ministry, Sermet Atacanli, said. He added that the pro-Kurdish news agency DEM and the journal Ozgur Politika, both based in Germany, were also mentioned in the meeting with the German ambassador. Turkey has recently stepped up pressure on European countries to have Med-TV closed, which it says acts as the mouthpiece of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

Epidemic kills about 100 in Sudan

KHARTOUM (R) — An unidentified epidemic has killed about 100 people in the past week in south Sudan's third largest town and more are dying every day, residents and press reports said on Wednesday. Mongo Ajak, the governor of upper Nile state, of which Malakal is the capital, told the privately owned Al Ushra newspaper that 78 people had died in Malakal from the disease and it was still killing around five people a day. Other sources put the number of victims at over 100. One resident of the town told Reuters by telephone that the disease had killed more than 100 people and was spreading to the countryside. He said 17 very sick people were on a river barge on their way to northern Sudan to seek treatment and even cattle and chickens were also dying from the disease.

Yemeni condemned to die for bombing

ADEN (AFP) — A southern Yemeni court on Wednesday sentenced one man to death and 10 others to prison terms for a bomb attack last year that killed five people. The court condemned Abdul Hisham Nasser Tamimi. Nine other defendants received sentences ranging from two to three years and two others were acquitted. The men were found guilty of belonging to an armed group, "The Movement for Self-Determination," which opposed President Ali Abdallah Saleh, and the bomb attack in Khudud, to the north of Aden, in July last year.

U.N. expert hits U.S. on Muslims, Native Americans

GENEVA (R) — The United Nations special investigator on religion said on Wednesday a pervasive "Islamophobia" existed in the United States fed by a "hate-filled" image of Muslims presented in the media.

In a report to be presented to the U.N.'s Human Rights Commission next week, he also said the beliefs and religious practices of Native Americans were often abused and were in need of greater protection.

The investigator, Tunisian lawyer Abdul Fattah Amor, argued that limits should be placed on freedom of the press "when it generates actual intolerance, the antithesis of freedom."

Amor, former dean of the law faculty at the University of Tunis, said the portrayal of Muslims by U.S. news organisations created the climate for vandalism against mosques, physical violence against Muslims, and job discrimination.

The administration of President Bill Clinton had launched initiatives aimed at preventing intolerance and discrimination on religious grounds directed against the Muslim community, estimated to total between 3.5 and 3.8 million.

"American public opinion, and hence society, is thus informed, and formed, by negative representations of the Muslims," he added.

Amor compiled his report after a visit to the United States in January and February this year. On Tuesday, he issued another survey on religion in Vietnam, whose government he accused of keeping all believers under tight control.

On Native Americans, he said, a past policy of assimilation which they described as genocide continued to have its effects.

Although policies in favour of indigenous peoples had been set in motion in recent years, and particularly under the Clinton presidency, they needed to be strengthened in the religious sphere, the report said.

Government orders on the protection of Native Americans' sacred sites, many of them in areas under industrial or agricultural development, were not backed with legal teeth to enforce compliance.

Access to the sites was a fundamental right in the sphere of religion, the exercise of which must be guaranteed, the U.N. investigator said.

Amor said it was essential to make U.S. society "and the whole of the administrative and political apparatus aware of the indigenous peoples' religious and spiritual beliefs to prevent any attitude... of discrimination in the field of religion."